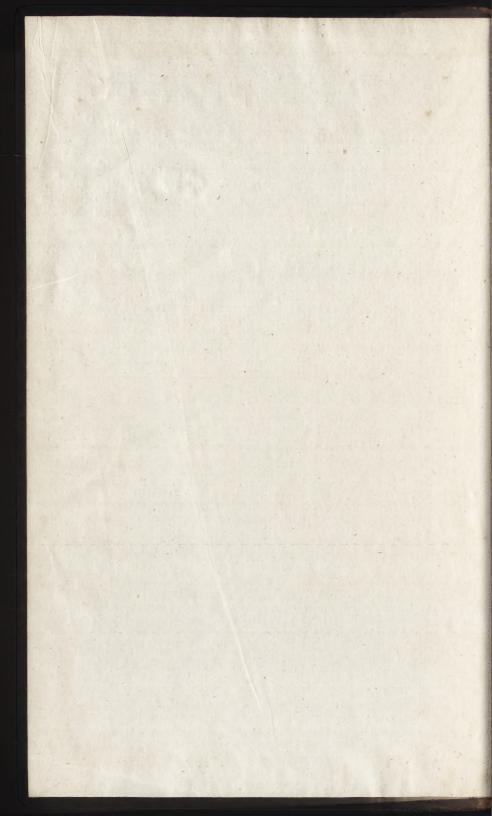
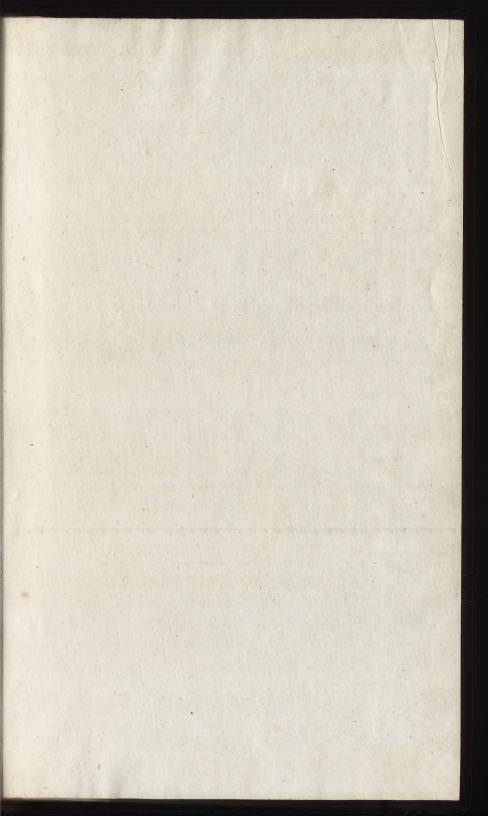
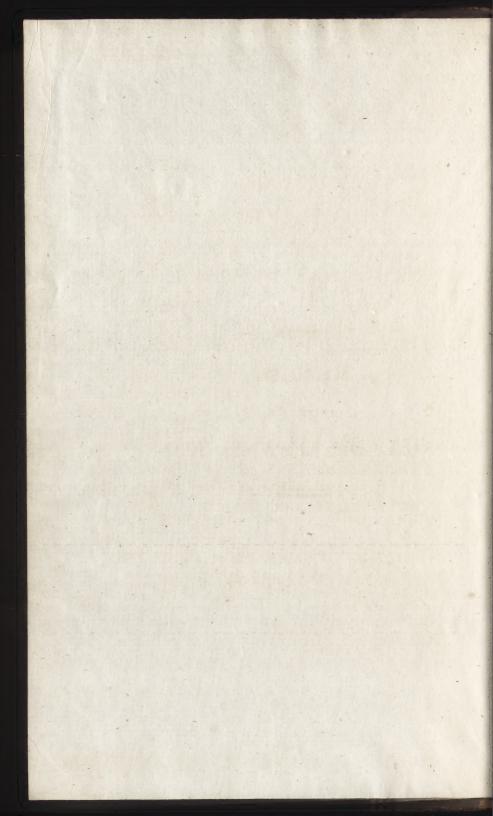


+ 175 4-115-17 ru plondon's loding picture dealers mot m NUC







# MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

London: Printed by John Dean, 57, Wardour Street, Soho.

NOBE DESENDANS, ESO.





Noel Desenfans, Esq."

Published by Varior, Hood & Sharpe, Poultry, Jan. 1.1810.

## **MEMOIRS**

OF THE LATE

# NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

CONTAINING ALSO,

APLAN

FOR

PRESERVING THE PORTRAITS

OF

Distinguished Characters;

POEMS,

AND

LETTERS.

London:

PRINTED BY JOHN DEAN, 57, WARDOUR STREET, SOHO.

1810.

# STOR IN

#### BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

# NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

The observation in Gray's beautiful Elegy, a work familiar to every poetic mind, respecting the obscurity of persons, who, if born under happier auspices, might have distinguished themselves in the world, is in some degree applicable to the subject of our present notice; for though he did not pass through life in so humble a condition as the supposed 'Village Hampden,' and 'mute inglorious Milton,' but, on the contrary, was much known and res-

pected, yet his circle of action was by no means calculated to display the extent of those powers with which nature had gifted him, and which his own assiduity had improved, by all the aids that learning and reflection could afford.

Noel Desentans, Esq. was born in the year 1745, at Douay, in Flanders. After he had obtained all the advantages of education which could be derived from the college of his native place, and received those prizes which are awarded to students of pre-eminent talents and acquisitions; he was removed to the University at Paris, where he also distinguished himselfso much as to acquire similiar honours, and where the general propriety of his conduct and character excited a confident expectation that he would become an ornament of society, in morals as well as genius. This

expectation was realized by the whole of his subsequent career, through every situation, in which his talents and his influence found room for exertion.

At the age of eighteen, Mr. Desenfans wrote a work intitled, L'Elève de la Nature, in two volumes, which was translated into English, and was favourably received in this country; but the original was so much admired on the Continent, that it received high praise from scholars, philosophers, and all who were eminent for literary taste. Among other gratifying marks of distinction, it procured for him an introduction to the celebrated Jean Jaques Rousseau, who then resided with the Prince de Conti, in the Temple, at Paris. Being introduced to this extraordinary character as the author of L'Elève de la

Nature, at a supper given by the prince to the Spanish ambassador, Rousseau addressed Mr. Desenfans in the following manner: "You are a young man who may expect to be of service to the world in the career upon which you are entering; but I know mankind so well, that if I had the Truth in my hand, I would not open it to give it them."

Mr. Desenfans soon distinguished himself by other literary productions on various subjects, and particularly in a dramatic piece, intitled, "La Fête de Coulange," founded upon Marmontel's tale of Laurette. This piece was performed with great success, and represented before the late Stadholder at the Hague, with great applause.

In a few years after, Mr. Desenfans came to this country, and soon made himself know to men of letters by a tract on education, intitled, Sulmiste et Sergit, and another work in two volumes, under the name of Les Deux Hermites. Both of these works evince considerable knowledge of human nature, and abound with admirable rules for the cultivation of the mind. and improvement of the heart. The work, however, which principally contributed to introduce Mr. Desenfans to the learned and elegant circles of this country, was a letter to the celebrated Mrs. Mon-TAGUE, vindicating the great and good Fenelon, in answer to some reflections on his character, in one of Lord CHESTER-FIELD's letters to his son. This vindication of the amiable and enlightened author of TELEMACHUS, was so much admired in

France, that Monsieur Thomas, one of the members of the Academy of Belles Lettres, at Paris, addressed a letter to Mr. Desenfans, by order of the general body, testifying their gratitude to him for his able defence of their immortal countryman; a gratitude which he assured Mr. Desenfans was felt by every friend of learning, virtue, and patriotism, in the French nation, if not in all Europe.

Another work from Mr. Desenfans ought to be mentioned, because it shews that when he became a denizen of the British dominions, he was anxious to shew a patriotic zeal for his adopted country. The work we allude to, was a plan for promoting the arts of this country, by the establishment of a NATIONAL GALLERY, intended at once to give scope to rising ta-

lents, and to record the merits of all, who, by naval and military achievements, had increased the glory, and supported the honour of the British empire. In this tract Mr. Desenfans displayed a comprehensive mind, and the plan was so well devised and digested, that its accomplishment would have been a national honour, and could have supported itself by its own probable resources. The proposal of this plan is a satisfactory answer to the only charge which has ever been brought against Mr. Desenfans, implying that he promoted a taste for the works of the old masters, to the discouragement of living artists. But a still more satisfactory answer can be urged in his favour, for there are indisputable documents to prove that he expended not less than nine thousand five hundred pounds in purchasing the works of contemporary merit.\* Besides, it is well known that his fine collection of pictures was not open only to rank and affluence, but to every student who wished to improve by meditating on the best productions of former times. The death of an uncle, who bequeathed a considerable part of his property to Mr. Desenfans, enabled him to add considerably to this collection, which will always remain a monument of his taste.

When the PRINCE PRIMATE OF POLAND, brother of the late amiable monarch of that country, came to England, Mr. Des-

<sup>\*</sup> Upon one occasion Mr, Desenfans having heard that an artist had painted two pictures of merit on historical subjects, but that nobody offered to purchase them, ordered his carriage, went to the artist, and immediately bought the works in question at the price proposed.

enfans had the honour to be introduced to him, and the impression which he made upon the mind of that prince, produced an intimacy between them of the most friendly nature. The prince found in Mr Desenfans, a man of profound judgment, well acquainted with the true interests of states, and therefore calculated to assist his royal brother. At his desire Mr. Desenfans was induced to accept the office of CONSUL GENERAL of Poland, by a letter tendering the appointment from the king himself, The Earl of SHELBURN, then Lord Lansdown, who was well acquainted with the talents and character of Mr. Desenfans, some time after observed that if he had been appointed Prime Minister of Poland, instead of Consul General, the unfortunate monarch would probably have closed his days in happiness upon his throne. Such an observation from so shrewd a politician, and one so well acquainted with mankind, deserves to be remembered for the honour of Mr. Desenfans.

Mr. Desenfans was honoured by the correspondence of the illustrious Stanislaus, and two letters from that amiable monarch, while they shew his benignant, generous, and pious character, are too flattering to the memory of Mr. Desenfans to be omitted in this place. The original of one of these letters, with several others, which were intrusted to the care of Lord Whitworth, upon an occasion which shall be noticed hereafter, was destroyed by fire at St. Petersburgh. The original of the second is in the possession of Sir Francis Bourgeois, who received the

honour of knighthood from the unfortunate monarch, before the cruel policy of neighbouring states deprived him of his throne.

#### LETTER I.

ON PRINT AND ASSESSMENT OF STREET

Versovie.

Au milieu de tant d'afflictions qui m'entourent, surtout depuis la mort de mon frère le Primat, j'ai pourtant senti la douceur de quelque consolation en voyant la que vous prenez à ma perte cruelle d'une manière si affectueux, elle m'a extrémement touchée. Je vais vous en remercier du meilleur de mon cœur, et vous prie de me conserver les sentimens favorables que vous avez si bien manifestés pour moi à mon frère, pendant et depuis son séjour en Angleterre. Il m'a si bien appris combien

vous et votre digne ami Sir Francis êtes des hommes vraiment estimables, que je désire beaucoup de vous sçavoir toujours touts deux bien disposés pour moi.

Puissiez vous être toujours plus heureux que Votre très-affectioné, STANISLAS AUGUSTE ROY.

A Monsieur Noel Desenfans,

&c. &c. &e.

## LETTER II. [Translation.]

As the official connection which subsisted between you and me seems to be at end, and as I have no hopes of ever seeing you, I think it my interest to wish you a farewell; and this truly from the bottom of my heart, in which you will retain your place until my death; and I hope we shall

meet where righteous souls and good hearts, according to my belief, will be united together.

All etiquette and ceremonious custom is now totally interrupted between us, at least as to myself; I shall never have the trouble of observing again diplomatic rules and customs, but I shall always confess, that I love and honour your king and your nation! This is what I desire you to tell them. I wish [also that you may always preserve a remembrance and affection towards your friend.

Since I cannot converse with you in person, my portrait may now and then make you think of

STANISLAUS AUGUSTUS REX.

Before this benevolent and patriotic monarch was divested of his crown, he had commissioned Mr. Desenfans, whose taste and knowledge in painting were universally admitted, to form a collection for him of the works of the best masters. king possessed some valuable pictures, and was an excellent judge of painting, to which he was much attached; but his chief view in giving this commission, was to promote the progress of the fine arts in Poland. After, however, the dismemberment and partition of his kingdom, by the courts of Prussia and St. Petersburgh, there seemed to be little chance that he would be able to possess the collection which he wished to acquire with such enlightened and patriotic motives. Mr. Desenfans, however, had proceeded so far in assembling rare works of the best artists,

that, notwithstanding this unexpected and inauspicious state of affairs in Poland, he resolved to render his collection as complete as possible. Unfortunately the dreadful revolution in France afforded him a favourable opportunity, as many emigrant noblemen, who came to this country in the year 1790, contrived to bring with them many highly valuable pictures, and were reduced to the necessity of converting those treasures of art into a source of subsistence which had long been dear to them as the objects of laudable pride, and the memorials of family taste and former magnificence. Mr. Desenfans, however, was of too liberal a nature to profit by misfortunes, and therefore purchased according to the value of the works, not according to the situation of the possessor. And here it is but just to observe, that though Mr.

Desenfans was distinguished for his pure taste, and extensive knowledge of pictures, he thought proper to avail himself of the judgment of Sir Francis Bourgeois, whose genius he had patronized in its dawn, whose excellence as an artist has amply justified all his presaging hopes, and whose persevering and cordial friendship he has rewarded by a legacy equally appropriate and munificent.

When by the death of the King of Poland, and the situation of the remaining part of the family of that monarch, Mr. Desenfans found that the collection of pictures which he had assembled with great expence, was left upon his hands, he made application to the court of Russia, through the medium of Lord Whitworth, the British ambassador at that court; naturally conceiving that the prince, who possessed so great

a part of Poland, would feel himself bound to discharge the obligations of the deceased monarch. For this purpose all the necessary documents were sent to his lordship, but on account of the extraordinary change which took place in the sentiments of the Emperor Paul towards this country, it was thought expedient to commit to the flames the official papers of the British ambassador, lest they might fall into the hands of the Russian government; and the documents sent by Mr. Desenfans, among which was the King of Poland's letter before mentioned, are supposed to have been destroyed on that occasion.

Mr. Desenfans married Miss Morris, sister of Sir John Morris, Bart. of Clasemont, Glamorganshire, of whom it is enough to say that her mind and heart

fully entitled her to such a husband, and who too well proves her sense of his worth, by inconsolable regret for the loss of so excellent a man.

Mr. Desenfans may be said to have been born a poet, and nothing but his enthusiastic attachment to the art of Painting could have prevented him from being one of the most ardent and persevering votaries of the sister Muse. He sometimes, however, paid homage to her shrine, and his poetical effusions were always marked by an easy playful spirit, a pure and elegant gallantry, or a sacred regard to the awful duties of religion and virtue.

He has not only left a splendid memorial of his taste for the arts in the exquisite collection of pictures which he bequeath-

ed to Sir Francis Bourgeois; but in a descriptive catalogue of those which he purchased for the King of Poland; a work that abounds with proofs of his extensive and accurate knowledge of the best masters, and which is diversified and enlivened by anecdotes that develope and exemplify their respective talents and character.

As a private individual, no praise can be too high for Mr. Desenfans. No man was more alive to the interests of friendship and humanity. At any period when indisposition would have rendered him not only indifferent to all considerations merely relative to himself, but averse to all exertion on such an account if he saw any opportunity of serving a friend, of patronizing talents, or of assisting distress, it may be truly said of him, in the words

of our great dramatic bard, that on these occasions the cares of infirmity fell from him, "like dew-drops from a lion's mane," and he hastened to the scene of action with a glow of benevolence that operated with all the vigour of health, and all the spirit of youth, till he had fully accomplished his object.

Mr. Desenfans was of the middle size, with a well proportioned form. His features were regular, and strongly expressive of benevolence and penetration. There was a spirit and vivacity in his eyes that strikingly resembled those of Mr. Garrick. His manners were courteous, affable, and attractive, the natural effect of the urbanity of his disposition. It is hardly necessary to add that his table was marked by liberal and elegant hospitality, and

that his house was the resort of genius, taste, and knowledge. He proved his attachment to this country by remaining in it when Monsieur de Calonne, who had been his fellow student at Douay, and with whom he maintained a friendship through life, was at the head of affairs in France, and consequently could have given Mr. Desenfans, whose abilities he well knew, a situation calculated to draw them forth for his own advantage, and the interests of the French nation.

The numerous friends of this meritorious individual, and we may add, society, were deprived of him on the 8th of July, 1807. His remains are deposited in a private chapel, erected for that purpose, according to an appropriate and elegant design by Mr. Soane, in the garden of the

house where he resided in Portland Road, and where a place is reserved for his amiable relict, and also for Sir Francis Bourgeois, who cherishes the memory of so valuable a friend with filial veneration.

It may not be improper to conclude with the following lines:—

### **EPITAPH**

ON THE LATE

### NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

When wealth and grandeur meet the common doom,
The pliant Arts adorn the stately tomb,
Plant round the place the cypress and the bay,
And Fancy adds the tributary lay,
Design'd to bid the votive stone declare

The knowledge, wisdom, virtue, buried there.

Hence generous Desenfans, thy friends can pay,

A ready homage to thy honour'd clay:

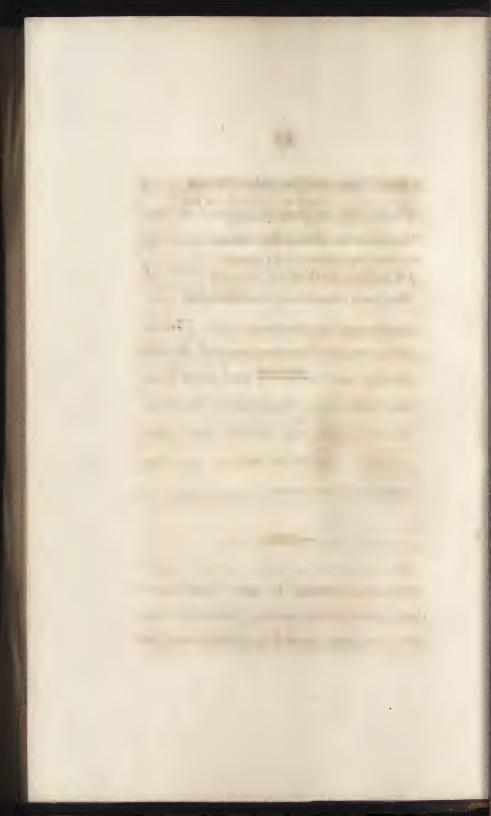
Tis only by transferring fiction's strains,

To mark the sepulchre of thy remains;

And all who know thy merits, will agree,

The flattery's changed to truth, applied to thee.

T,



A Plan, preceded by a short Review of the Fine Arts, to preserve among us, and transmit to Posterity, the Portraits of the most distinguished Characters of England, Scotland, and Ireland, since his Majesty's Accession to the Throne. Also, to give Encouragement to British Artists, and to enrich and adorn London with some Galleries of Pictures, Statues, Antiques, Medals, and other valuable Curiosities, without any Expence to Government.

Notwithstanding I have lived near thirty years in this country, whose government has been pleased to incorporate me with the natives in all their rights and privileges, I yet hardly dare venture publishing the least pamphlet in English; but as elegance is not essential to offer a plan, I shall be satisfied if I am understood.

The idea occurred to me only a few days since, on being informed that monuments are about to be erected in St. Paul's Cathedral, to the memory of Major-General Dundas, Captain Faulkner, and Captain Rundle Burgess; and in Westminster-Abbey, to that of Captains Harvey, Hutt, and Montague.

I felt a secret pleasure on reflecting, that those brave officers, who fell in defence of their king and country, will live in marble, and serve as memorials of patriotism, loyalty, and heroism.

Gratitude has ever been the characteristic of Great Britain; in no country are merit and services rewarded with more zeal and promptitude; the common men are, equally with their commanders, the objects of her solicitude; and when their wounds or advanced years call them to retirement, she provides them an asylum, where they are supplied with the necessaries of life: but if any one should fall an honourable victim to his courage, his wife and children are immediately provided for by some of those laudable subscriptions that are invariably raised after an action. Besides, the tribute of a monument erected in remembrance of an officer, is alike sacred to all the valiant men who fought and fell with him.

My gratification would have been as

great as sincere, in beholding the likenesses of those commanders; and I cannot but heartily regret the want of a public gallery appropriated to the portraits of our distinguished characters: Europe does not present such a one; it is reserved for Great Britain, ever eager to exalt merit to set other nations the example of an establishment, which cannot fail proving a stimulus to emulation in every class.

Should not the portraits of a Wolfe, a Heathfield, a Howard, a Cornwallis, a Chatham, a Mansfield, a Howe, a St. Vincent, a Rodney, a Duncan, a Nelson, a Warren, and other great men, who have so largely contributed to illustrate this reign, be assembled, in order to afford us the daily enjoyment of them, and be transmitted collectively to posterity?

Their respective families regard them now with veneration; yet they will, perhaps, fall a sacrifice to the cravings or necessities of avaricious or profligate descendants; and those portraits which should be guarded with a jealous care, and excite public admiration, may be fated to moulder into dust at the door of a broker's shop.

Another motive, no less powerful, makes me desirous that such a plan should be adopted: I see with amazement and pleasure, the rapid progress which the Fine Arts have been making in Great Britain for some years past; and while I regret that men of abilities should suffer for want of encouragement, I suffer myself, that those abilities should degenerate for want of employment, which, if they remain inactive,

must inevitably be the case; for the Fine Arts, when deprived of practice, are on the eve of a lethargy.

Three centuries have not yet elapsed since painting has been known and cultivated here; but, perhaps, from time immemorial, architecture and sculpture have been so in this country; which however, with the exception of a few architects, produced no eminent artists till the Royal Academy was instituted: the best works, therefore, that have been done here in painting and sculpture, previous to that fortunate epoch, were executed by foreigners. Henry the Eighth, though in so many respects a perfect contrast to our present sovereign, was, however, like him, a lover and patron of painting, for he long employed Hans Holbein, who became celebrated in his service.

The next English monarch who displayed real taste, was Charles the First, who, besides being endowed with a good natural capacity, travelled through France and Spain, where he saw the performances of the greatest masters. At Madrid he was presented with some excellent pictures, which, when he returned home, contributed to keep up and improve that knowledge he had acquired in foreign countries.

From that period, taste rapidly spread through the nation, and in a short time our nobility vied with each other in forming collections, whilst Charles was daily increasing his own, not only with the best works he could procure from abroad, but also with those of Reubens, Vandyck, and other artists, who were employed for him in his palace of Whitehall.

But as soon as Providence permitted licentiousness and superstition to triumph over that ill-fated prince, his loss, on a sudden paralysed taste, and the Fine Arts, as in a total eclipse, were plunged into darkness; the king's pictures were sold, and scattered on the Continent: and the unfortunate artist, deprived of his royal patron, banished all hope, and dropped the pencil. This was the first check painting experienced in England.

In reading the history of Painters, I have remarked, that they generally excel in proportion to the patronage they receive from sovereigns. Less ambitious of wealth than honours, an artist looks up to a monarch as the fountain-head of his wishes, and a wise prince, who has at heart the good of his country, and knows how to form great men, never denies a smile to rising merit.

The Royal Academy of London, though of no earlier date than the year 1768, has acquired celebrity throughout all Europe. Such is the emulation in this seminary, and with so much avidity do the numerous candidates struggle for any vacancy that happens, that I have frequently doubted, however honourable it may be to have a seat in the House of Commons, whether the difficulty is not as great to obtain one in the Royal Academy. This emulation is, in a great degree, excited by the uniform and constant patronage the King has conferred on the institution; its annual exhibition is honoured by a visit from their Majesties, after which it is the resort of the nobility and gentry, of foreigners, and all men of taste.

Every artist, whether he his a member of the academy or not, has the privilege of sending his performances to the exhibition, where the certainty of their being viewed by persons of the first rank and judgment stimulates his utmost exertion; and I have no doubt but this has, in no small degree, contributed to the fame our artists now enjoy.

I perfectly remember the exhibitions made soon after the Royal Academy was founded, and candour compels me to say, I never saw worse productions than those they were composed of, particularly in painting. Indeed, it seemed as if its rules and principles had been totally unknown to most of the exhibitors, who had not the least notion of drawing, transparency, colouring, or expression. There were,

however, scattered among those paintings, as a few diamonds in a necklace of false stones, the works of a very limited number of artists, some of whom had studied in Italy; they prevented the rooms from being deserted; though, perhaps, the King's patronage was their best support: for, his Majesty's wish that the Fine Arts should be encouraged, having been declared, his example and indulgence were seconded by the public.

I call on those who have witnessed the primitive exhibitions of the Academy, to attest the astonishing progress it has made since that period. If private enemies, or the superficial connoisseur of this country, will dispute it, I apply to foreigners, who have rendered British Artists justice, not

only by extolling their works, but also by purchasing them at very high prices.

Being informed, a few years since, that a small picture, representing a Child at Prayers, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, was on sale at Paris, though I immediately sent Mr. Perregeaux, the banker, a commission of two hundred guineas, I could not obtain it, as the picture was deemed worth a great deal more.

I do not, however, mean to assert, that all Sir Joshua's performances are alike meritorious, for I have seen many indifferent ones of his hand; and so altered were his style and manner in the latter, from those he had formed in the earlier period of his life, that on my shewing him some pictures I had from the very family for which he had painted them, he actually enquired whom they were done by.

Blessed with superior capacity, and flattered by having attracted the notice of his sovereign, who placed him at the head of the Academy, and conferred on him the honour of knighthood, Sir Joshua made the greatest efforts to distinguish himself; and he soon, by his own works in Painting, equalled the greatest of the old masters, whilst by his excellent discourses to the students, he formed their taste; and by encouraging emulation, he raised ambition, that powerful spring of the human mind, in the younger artists, who are now become the ablest professors in Europe. Such is the result of an establishment which has caused no kind of expence to government;

but le us examine what advantages the nation his besides derived from it.

Therevival of the Fine Arts has been a source of more benefits to Great Britain, than a superficial observer, who looks on them is an amusement, would be led to suppose they not only amuse, but are a profitable occupation: and by opening the mind and habituating our youth to employment and industry, they ward off vice and desipation. We may, therefore, justly apply to the Fine Arts, what Cicero said of the Sciences, Adolescentiam alunt, senectitem oblectant, &c.

Out innovators, that fresh set of false and inpious philosophers, who, in order to tranple on laws, dare deny their God, are nov setting up Nature as the author of the world, and of all commoditiess and luxuries, when in fact, Nature, our common and savage mother, however grand and beautiful, does no more than produce man feeble and naked, and leaves him, with all his infirmities, at the mercy of the four elements.

But the eternal and only philosoppher, who created the world, has also created Nature as a mere instrument to his immutable will, and through her daily gives life to millions of beings, which he endows with force to support their naturall infirmities, and with sufficient instinct to supply their natural wants; so that, from the elephant to the smallest quadruped, and from man to the minutest insect, every living creature is enabled to provide its food and its home; but, although that in-

stinct procures them no further advantage, it evidently comes from God; therefore from him also, and not from Nature, must come that industry, those arts, and refinements, to which are owing the commodities and luxuries every polite nation enjoys.

Let us view those parts of the Russian dominions, and other countries, where the Fine Arts are still unknown: we shall find their inhabitants in a state of incivilization and ignorance, little better than savage nature. So peculiarly is refinement the characteristic of the Fine Arts, that they cannot be cultivated without it; and at the same time that they influence our mind and manners, they diffuse taste, and correct it in every class.

That taste has penetrated into our manufactures, and renders British goods of a better quality than any in Europe, so that they fetch higher prices in foreign markets, where they are sought for as superior merchandize.

Innumerable, almost, are the blessings which the Fine Arts, since their first introduction into this country, have poured on the nation. To Architecture we are indebted for our elgant and comfortable homes; for our awful and august temples, and those superb and noble edifices with which the metropolis and other parts of the country are decorated. It was the powerful and fairy hand of architecture, that threw across the Thames those magnificent and useful bridges; and that has raised those tremendous and dismal, but neces-

sary fortresses, where crime immured can no longer hurt innocence or disturb society. To architecture we owe our very ships, the sources of our wealth and commerce; those light and travelling buildings, with which the skilful and intrepid Briton masters the seas, and defies his enemies.

Are we not also obliged to Sculpture for having embellished our public places and buildings; and for affording us the consolation of paying a last tribute to those heroes who have sacrificed themselves through loyalty and patriotism? 'Tis Sculpture has filled Westminster Abbey with those monuments we so much admire, and which are so much envied by foreigners, who, no doubt envy us no less the honour of having possessed the great men they are sacred to.

How truly grateful do I feel to Sculpture, for having enriched us with the statues of our monarchs! I mean of those who have endeared themselves, by studying the public good, and supporting with courage that load of cares and anxieties and the troublesome grandeurs, which unknown in private life, are, unfortunately for princes, inseparable from royalty. Yes, her divine chisel has perpetuated their figures in marble and bronze; but, happy Britons! 'tis chiefly on gold that Sculpture has impressed the august features of your kings, and its vast circulation has long proclaimed your unrivalled opulence, and the glory of their reigns.

Painting, whose branches are so numerous, rescues us from passing many hours between four melancholy walls; and not

only contributes to our wealth, but affords us a variety of pleasures.

Like inhabitants of a magic palace, we find assembled around us, in her diversified works, the charms and grandeur of Nature: and witness under our own roofs, the most interesting events, the heroic and memorable deeds of past and present times.

'Tis her bold pencil that has traced those majestic mountains and stupendous rocks, that luxuriant landscape and enchanting sea-calm, and those tempestuous oceans rocking our formidable fleets, the invincible guardians of our fortunate coasts,

In those pictures she commemorates

John signing Magna Charta, and the Defeat of Tippoo's Forces; .... that records

Alexander's Entry into Babylon; .... the following suite are Reviews of our Troops, whose discipline is as characteristic as their loyalty; .... in this Sea View, our ships, like a floating city, are returning, loaded with Indies' produce; .... in its companion, A brisk Sea Gale, our sallors bring into port the captive enemy; .... that, which represents the benevolent Titus lamenting his having passed one day without doing good, excites in my breast, sentiments of loyalty and attachment for a good prince, equal to the abhorrence which the expressive pencil of Lebrun creates, by recording the Cruelties of Herod; .... yon picture, so genial to my feelings, is emblematical of the glorious Revolution of 1688; in its wisdom dictates the British Constitution, and expels for ever, from the country, usurping despotism, and savage anarchy.

Painting adorns the chaste bosom of a faithful wife, with a gift dearer than pearls; and to alleviate our impatience and soothe our sorrows, she presents us with the unfading image of our absent and our long-departed friends.

Painting arrests the flight of time, and, in spite of the ravages of years, preserves the most exquisite beauties in their youthful bloom; and gratifies us with the portraits of those amiable women, who, no less endearing than beauty, pour balm on life, and render it comfortable.

Her pencil has transmitted to us our brave defenders, our vigilant and upright magistrates, our zealous prelates, our distinguished lawyers, our vent'rous merchants who have enriched us with the eastern and western wealth, our loyal patriots who have supported with equal ardour the rights of the sovereign and of the people; and those few, but truly great, ministers, who, unmindful of private fortune, have dedicated their time and superior abilities to the good of their country; who, disturbed by clamours, harassed by envy, persecuted by calumny, and overcharged with labours and anxieties, have lived in the midst of storms, and whose retirement, as the only reward of their faithful services, has been embittered by the displeasure of their prince, and the hatred of a deluded people.

For some years past, Painting has added to our commerce a new branch, which has enriched many individuals, and contributed to swell the public revenue; for, since the art has acquired vigour in this country, and taste is more spread, the number of collectors of pictures and prints has considerably increased, so that, previously to the war, the importation and exportation of both, into and from Great Britain, was immense; and as a heavy duty is paid at the Custom House, on their importation, government drew large sums on their account; and that principally from the foreign dealer, who, with the money he received for those he brought, purchased other pictures to take home.

Exclusively of that duty, imported pictures generally come to the hammer, either in whole collections, or introduced into sales of furniture, when they again pay a duty to the Excise; and as most of them ar-

rive unframed, our gold-beaters, carpenters, joiners, frame-makers, gilders, and other mechanics, are considerably benefited by that traffic.

Painting has rendered another service to Great Britain, by raising the art of engraving to the highest pitch; and I may with justice say, this country now possesses the first painters and the best engravers. Indeed, our printsellers are convinced of it, and may attest, that before the rupture of peace, they used to export vast numbers of prints, for which large sums have been remitted from abroad; a proof that the prints taken from the works of British painters, are, in proportion, as highly valued there as the works themselves: and that those are really so, we cannot doubt, when we recollect the great prices that have been paid on

the Continent for the performances of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson, Mortimer, Wright of Derby, and others of our artists.

Previously to his painting for Messrs. Boydell three historicals for about 2000l, Sir Joshua sent two of his pictures to Russia, for one of which he received 1500 guineas, and, if I recollect well, was to be paid 1000 for the other; it was about that time he painted a Holy Family, for which Mr. Macklin paid him a very large sum, and 800 or 1200 guineas for the Cottagers; the same year Sir Joshua sold the portrait of the celebrated Mrs. Siddons, in the Character of Melpomene, and a Nymph, for which he received 1000 guineas.

There are men of acknowledged judgment in the art, who do not view Sir Joshua's works with the partiality their excellence deserves, but the gratifications of the mind are as various as those of the senses. Rembrandt's style was the opposite of Poussin's, yet the eminence of both is undisputed; their performances are more and more coveted, and every day increasing in value. Such, I may venture to assert, from their many admirers, will be the case with Sir Joshua's productions, which moderately calculated, will not be valued at less than 100,000l. He who has so enriched his country, has not eaten the bread of idleness!!!

Nor can a fortune acquired by an artist be compared to one made by commerce or the cultivation of an estate. Commerce is a mere exchange of commodities; and the possessor of an estate, however careful his management, does only what many others would do as well; so that he, in fact, adds nothing to the common property. But an able artist, in enriching his family, adds to the property of the nation, since he creates by his genius the materials of his fortune.

Unique and happy talent, which by animating a canvas, renders it of a high pecuniary value; or gives life to a stone, and makes it worth its weight in gold!!! Surely, the philosophical one, so long and so vainly sought for, could operate no greater wonders.

Let it not be objected, that the value of pictures, statues, &c. is imaginary. Though

depress their price, as well as that of diamonds and other property, yet the time must return when they will fetch their intrinsic value.

There was a period when the works of the greatest masters, both in painting and sculpture, were sold uncommonly cheap; and the very large sums we pay for them, since taste has gained ground in the country, are the best vouchers that the intrinsic merit of pictures and statues constitutes their real value, though their producing it in cash depends on circumstances. Notwithstanding, therefore, our artists are individually interested in their productions being disposed of without delay, it is immaterial to the nation at large, whether they are exported immediately or not; for

once in being, they are a valuable acquisition to the country, and must be considered as gold in ingots, whose coinage is reserved for the future.

I must not omit mentioning among the different advantages which the institution of the Royal Academy has produced during the last twenty-eight years, that its annual exhibition brings, in the course of a month or five weeks, between three and four thousand pounds; with which that respectable body not only defray the expences of their establishment, but also maintain a public school of drawing, architecture, sculpture, and painting, and are at the charge of sending every year into Italy, some British youths for their improvement; besides which, they make an annual allowance to a number of poor widows

and orphans; and the remainder of the money is vested in Bank Stock, as an accumulating fund, to prevent, in case of emergencies, their ever becoming burthensome to government.

The Nation has besides, acquired by that institution, a considerable property in the paintings, statues, library, and other valuables that are in the Royal Academy.

Notwithstanding our Artists have deserved so well of us, they have scarcely at present any employment. The war having put a stop to our correspondence in many parts of the Continent, they receive no commissions from abroad; and unfortunately, the laudable undertakings of Messrs. Boydell and Mr. Macklin, for

whom they used to paint, are also at an end; many persons who have sufficient knowledge to discern their merit, are not in circumstances to employ them; and many, whose influence would permit it, are deterred by the old prejudice, that modern productions are of little or no value.

At Paris, Rome, Vienna, Madrid, &c. we find in the most famed cabinets, modern pictures amongst those of the old masters, as their connoisseurs consider the excellence of the work, without appreciating it for being two centuries or two years old. The prejudice has, however, been carried here to lengths truly hurtful to the modern Arts; it has discouraged our collectors from embracing the example set them in neighbouring states, and has caused them to overlook those works,

which the taste and knowledge that formed their rich and superb collections must force them to admire.

I have long sought for the origin of that singular prejudice, which truly revolts common sense, and can attribute it to no other cause than this: When Rubens, Vandyck, and other good artists, lived here under the patronage of Charles the First, they painted, besides the portraits of the Royal Family, those of the principal nobility and gentry, whose descendants wished likewise to transmit theirs to their posterity. But as Charles's martyrdom had caused the downfall of the Arts; from that period, and during many years after, this [country no longer possessed any eminent painter\*, so that they were

I must except Cooper, the justly celebrated minature-

obliged to set to men of no talents, who professed themselves artists; but, upon their works being put in competition with those of Rubens and Vandyck, the connoisseur, with justice, pronounced those modern productions to be of little or no value.

The pencil, however, continued in ignorant hands, which is the cause we even see at this day, in the apartments of our nobility and other people of fashion, many of those stiff, gaudy, inanimate figures that are a disgrace to the Art, and which taste ere this, would have condemned to the flames, had it not been restrained by respect for the memory of those they either do, or were intended to represent

painter Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godrfey Kneller, who also came here about that time, had abilities, but were not first rate artists.

The Fine Arts remained at this low ebb till taken, as I have already said, under the immediate protection of George the Third, who has been pleased to give them an august asylum. But although they have real friends in men of true taste, it is hardly possible to credit the injuries they suffer from superficial connoisseurs, who, hoping to impose upon us effrontery for knowledge, are continually depreciating their works.

Those petits-maîtres, who, in general, are possessed of some copies, extol them as undoubted originals; and persecute, with the bitterest animosity, the artist who will not submit to the unpleasant task of falling into ecstacy before them. But should he prostitute his judgment, and condescend to praise their antiquated canvasses, and

half-mouldered pannels, he may, perhaps be so far honoured as to hear, that he possesses taste, and does not paint quite so ill as his brother artists.

A man of merit will never demean himself; and the aspiring artist, attached to his studies, having no time to spare in idle visits, cannot go and court fortune at the breakfast-table of a pretended connoisseur.

The period, I hope, is not far off, when the common adage, that nothing is good but what is old, will be totally done away; for as capital pictures of the most renowned schools, are now more frequently than ever exhibited in different parts of the metropolis, taste is improving more and

more and by comparing the works of the old masters with modern British productions, instead of deciding by their ears of the merit of our Artists, every one will judge by their own eyes, how well they are entitled to encouragement.

In fact, can any thing be more ridiculous, than to censure a performance, merely because its origin cannot be traced from the 14th or 15th century! And can we help bestowing our sovereign contempt on those soi-disant connoisseurs and critics, who pronounce on the authenticity of a picture by minutely examining its back, and who declare it a first-rate performance, if they can trace age in its antiquated canvas? The influence, however, which such men possess, has, in a great degree, laid the fate of our Artists at their mercy.

A man of sense considers, that a knowledge of the Fine Arts, is acquired by practice and study, as much as by capacity, and neither praises nor depreciates what he does not understand. Far from being bigoted to statues and pictures on account of their antiquity, he is satisfied their age cannot constitute their merit. At all times, and in all polite countries, there have been, as there are at present in Great Britain, a considerable number of inferior artists. Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum. Their works. of course, are excluded from curious cabinets; but they serve as furniture instead of China paper, and have a proportionable value.

Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Carracci, &c. had among their contemporaries, many

painters whose names have fallen into oblivion, and who earned their livelihood either by working for furniture, or by copying the performances of those immortal masters: their copies, therefore, must be nearly as old as the originals—an incontestible proof of the fallacy of their judgment, who esteem age the criterion of excellence.

But independently of that, many pictures have been made to acquire the appearance of age, even to a complete deception: and I remember, at the commencement of my collecting, about twenty-five years ago, having purchased some: they were offered at a price which induced me to buy; and as the very canvas on which they were lined, to prevent their falling into decay, appeared old; what-

ever uncertainty I might have been in as to their originality, I had not the least doubt as to their antiquity.

I sent for a picture-cleaner, who made use of spirits of wine, and in a moment, that which he worked upon was totally ruined: for the colours being still fresh and tender, and not having acquired that stoicity time generally gives them, went off with the varnish, which made the cleaner say, those pictures had been in the Westminster oven.

He then informed me, that there was at that time in Westminster, a manufactory, where several persons were employed in making copies, which, after being soiled with dirt and varnish, were thrown into an oven built on purpose, and moderately warmed; where, in the course of an hour or two, they became cracked, and acquired the appearance of age—and a certain stoicity, the pictures I had bought did not possess, which made me conclude, they had not been baked enough.

I will venture to assert, that many of our superficial connoisseurs have been caught, as I have been, with this snare, and have preferred to the best modern productions those of the Westminster oven. However, none of such trumpery pictures are any longer to be seen, since taste, and the number of collectors, have so much increased. From that circumstance, I flatter myself that the works of our Artists will come into vogue; which I am the more desirous of, from the interest I take in their welfare, and the conviction

that Great Britain will feel the beneficial effects of their being encouraged.

Men of superior abilities have always been scarce in every country, because nature and fortune must conspire to form them; and a nation is much wanting to her interests, who omits profiting by them, when possessed of such. To leave merit unemployed, is like denying oneself honey, by refusing a hive to the bees.

What advantage have not Italian artists procured their country? Attracted by their works in Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture, the rich and curious from every part in Europe, have flocked to Italy, which, for many years past, has drawn its best resources from its visitors.

Antwerp, the native place of Rubens, since the loss of her commerce, has been principally maintained by shewing the performances of that great man; many of which spread also in the Low Countries, together with those of Vandyck, Jordaens, the two Teniers, and others, have greatly contributed to enrich the Flemings.

The Dutch, who know both how to appreciate every thing they possess, and to turn it into cash, have received incredible prices for the high-finished pictures of their able and patient countrymen, Potter, Berchem, Cuyp, Dow, Wouvermans, Vanderwerff, Vanhuysum, Ostade, &c.

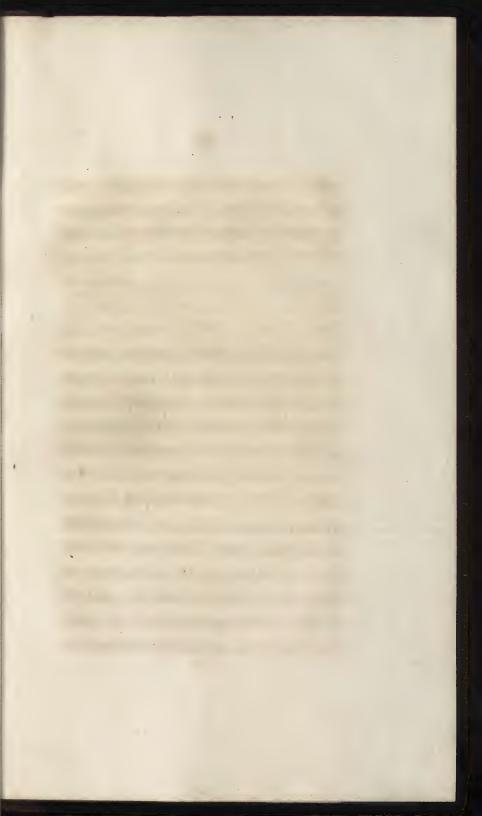
Spain has produced but three famed painters; Morales the Divine, the great Valesquez, and Murillo, the favourite of all our collectors. Spain has thought it good policy to retain most of their works; so that few of them being dispersed, they have brought that country less gold than the Peruvian mines, but have done her infinitely more honour.

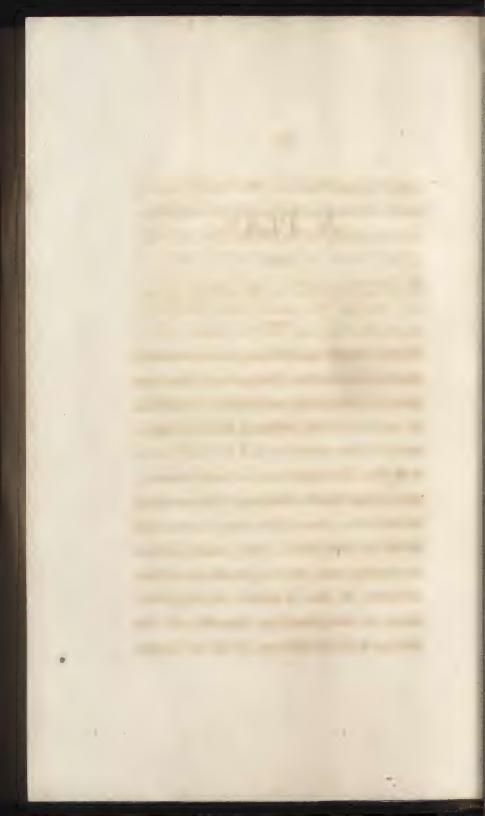
The French, by court-intrigues, were the cause of Poussin and Claude passing their lives at Rome; yet they were prudent enough to secure most of their pictures, which, joined to those of Lebrun, Lesueur, and other artists of the same school, have enabled them not only to form excellent collections for some of their nobility, but to carry on with other nations an extensive commerce, which has been of the utmost advantage to France. The very works of Vernet only, an excellent landscape and sea painter, but much in-

ferior to Claude, and who was still alive eight years ago, have produced no less than a million of livres; and those of Greuze, his contemporary, nearly double that sum.

At the epoch of the revolution, most of the French collections gave way; and the noble fugitives, who, on emigrating, were so fortunate as to export theirs, have experienced, that pictures have an intrinsic value, and are a real resource.

But I will now present the Plan I first mentioned.





## A PLAN.

Gutta cavat lapidem, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo.

GREAT BRITAIN, differing now in so many respects from other Monarchies, does not possess, like most countries, a collection of superb costly pictures, for the enjoyment of the sovereign, and to which, now and then, the public are permitted access; nor is it probable the King will ever form such a one, as, of the money annually levied for the state, a very small portion is appropriated for the private use of his Majesty, so that I cannot see the possibility of his gratifying himself and the nation with a Gallery, such as France

possessed, and such as are in Vienna, Spain, and other countries, whose monarchs have the absolute controll of the public money.

The King has, indeed, scattered in different places, some very capital pictures, among which are the celebrated Cartoons of Raphael; but were they all united, they would by no means form a collection to be compared to those of the Louvre, the Escurial, &c,

Since the 15th century, the Kings of France and Spain have been purchasing pictures at a vast expence. Lewis the Fourteenth, whose inordinate ambition aimed at surpassing all other potentates, added to his collection, with a profusion, which, perhaps, was hurtful to his people. But although George the Third has, from

the commencement of his reign, manifested knowledge and taste, instead of researching costly pictures and statues from foreign countries, he has made the Fine Arts of Great Britain the chief object of his attention and munificence, by which the nation has acquired several excellent Artists; yet, the want of a Public Gallery is felt, not only to contribute to her splendour, but as a centre point to the dilettanti, and a study to her rising Artists.

The sale of the justly-famed Orleans Collection, seems to have marked this as the period for fulfilling at once the wishes of the Student and the Connoisseur; but I am informed those pictures have been offered to Government, and that, on account of the necessities of the State, it has been judged proper to decline the pur-

chase. Therefore, since that grand object cannot be obtained at once, we must endeavour to obtain it gradually; and for that purpose I have traced a plan, by which, without any expence to Government, Great Britain will acquire a Gallery of the Portraits of our most distinguished characters, since the accession of his Majesty to the throne; another with the productions of our Historical, Battle, Landscape, Sea, and Miniature Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers; and a third Gallery with Antiques, and celebrated Pictures of the Old Masters.

This plan may be carried on in any part of the metropolis; but Montague House appears to me the most proper place, because it already contains, in the British Museum which is deposited

there, many attractive objects of curiosity, is the property of the Nation, and surrounded with land, on which, at an easy expence, those Galleries may be erected.

The admittance to that Museum is free. Any persons desirous of seeing it, must give in their names and places of abode, and in about a month or six weeks they receive a ticket of admission. But as many are ignorant of the mode of application, and few are certain whether in a month they will not have more serious engagements, Montague House continues little resorted to and little known, notwithstanding it contains many scarce and valuable curiosities, some of which are the gifts of individuals.

I have besides remarked, unaccountable as it may appear, that all places where no entrance-money is paid are little frequented; our theatres have never been so filled as since the advanced price, and I am persuaded many of our excellent actors would sometimes perform to empty benches if the admission were free.

The exhibition of the Royal Academy begins the latter end of April, or early in May, at one shilling each person, and closes about the King's birth-day; during which short space, as I have before mentioned, it generally produces between three and four thousand pounds, without any expence to any individual, for surely the visitors of the exhibition cannot consider their shilling as such.

As the British Museum was purchased by the Nation, the admission to it, as I have just remarked, is free; but is there no possibility of placing it on a footing similar to that of the Royal Academy, for the sake of raising it to a degree of splendour that will rival, or surpass in a few years any establishment of the kind in Europe? I am aware this cannot be done without an act of the Legislature, which I have not the means of soliciting, and which would be, in my opinion, too great a liberty for me to take. I, therefore, submit the plan to the trustees of the British Museum; most of whom being men in elevation and power, may carry it into practice, if, as I do, they consider it feasible, and likely to be productive of good to the country.

It will perhaps, be objected, that my application is ill-timed, Government having more serious business to occupy its attention than the prosperity of the Fine Arts. In peace, however, they will not want that encouragement which war has deprived them of; and, I must remark, that a country so powerful, so commercial, and so opulent as this, will propably always be engaged in, or at the eve of war.

But should the Plan meet with the approbation of his Majesty, and the acquiescence of Parliament, the following is the only method I can devise for carrying it into execution, without a grant of money.

1st, Montague House is a very large building, nearly filled with the British Museum; but the different curiosities it is composed of, may, without any detriment to them, be so arranged as to leave temporary room; to occupy which, the Trustees should make an humble application to obtain the portraits of their Majesties, and Government to name such distinguished characters, whose portraits it shall deem proper to deposite in Montague House, unless it should prefer delegating the nomination of them to the Trustees.

2d, No expence shall be incurred for attendants, there being already a sufficient number of them in Montague House, on account of the British Museum; but the Trustees will appoint a Manager or Director, with a small salary, who shall carry the plan into execution.

3d, That no inferior picture may be ad-

mitted into Montague House, the Trustees shall request the Royal Academy to appoint a Committee, which, from time to time, shall meet them, and give their assistance and advice in selecting the Artists, either in or, out of their body, for the execution of the portraits.

4th, As soon as a certain number of portraits shall be voted, the Director shall give proper notice to the different persons on whom Government shall have conferred that honour, and the first opportunity will be taken to have them painted. The Director shall also have the charge of applying to the relatives or friends of those who are no longer in existence, for the loan of their portraits, that our Artists may copy them—unless the originals should prove good pictures, and the respective possessors

should consent to deposit them in Montague House.

5th, When fifty or sixty portraits shall be completed and arranged, the free admittance to Montague House must be suppressed, and it shall be opened to the public by paying entrance money, as at the Royal Academy; except, however, the members of that body, their students, and any artists who exhibit with them, for whom the admission will continue free, as well as any other artist the Royal Academy shall recommend.

6th, Montague House shall be open from ten o'clock in the morning till six in the evening, from Lady-Day to Michaelmas; and from Michaelmas to Lady-Day, from ten till four. 7th, The porter of Montague House shall receive the entrance-money, and account for it every day to one of the attendants appointed for that purpose; and he shall remit it to the Trusteees, or their Treasurer, every fortnight.

8th, Montague House shall be open during June, July, September, October, December, January, March, and April, by which there will be a month's vacancy in every quarter; and this establishment cannot prove detrimental to the Royal Academy, as their exhibition takes place in May.

9th, In order to stimulate public curiosity, a new set of ten or twelve portraits shall be placed in Montague House every quarter. 10th, Artists employed for this establishment, will be obliged to send, as they do at the Royal Academy, their pictures properly framed.

11th, The Manager, or Director, to be entitled to no salary for the first year.

12th, The different Artists shall not be paid till twelve months after Montague House has been opened; and if, contrary to my expectations, the plan should not be attended with such success as to induce the Trustees to continue it longer, the attempt shall cease at the end of the first twelve months, and the artists, instead of receiving the price stipulated for their performances, shall only receive in proportion to the sum levied during the year: in which case, those performances shall

remain the property of Montague House; or, if the artist thinks the sum too inadequate, he shall receive back his own works.

But should the plan be successful the first twelve months, little doubt can be entertained of its being attended with increased success ever year; since new objects of curiosity will be added every quarter to the establishment: so that it is probable, it will in a short time produce a fund, capable of enabling the Trustees to commence the Galleries I have proposed erecting.

The portraits of their Majesties, and other distinguished characters, shall then be removed into the first Gallery, which shall be continued gradually, as the in-

. 1

creasing fund will allow the Trustees a latitude of expence. What emulation will it not create in every class of men, particularly in the navy and army, whom the love of fame, and devotion to their country, lead into the greatest dangers?

If an officer falls in distinguishing himself, his grateful country pays his respected memory the tribute of a monument; but why should the equally courageous and surviving hero be refused a mark of distinction, far superior to pecuniary recompence or momentary honours? for such are orders and other dignities, which, however desirable, must end so soon. Indeed, the compass of life is so narrow, that our rewards for heroic deeds are too little, and too little enjoyed.

How flattering to a Briton, and any subject of the sister kingdom, that as a proof of his having deserved well of his king and country, they have voted his image in a public gallery, to be beheld with pleasure and gratitude by his contemporaries, and to remain there in veneration to a remote posterity! A more flattering wish ambition cannot form; nor can a more desirable reward be offered to a disinterested and truly great man.

No opposition can be made to this plan, on account of a dearth of distinguished characters; for, since the accession of the Brunswick Family to the throne, no reign has been more illustrated than this, by eminent men, both in the navy and army, by orators, ministers, divines, lawyers, philosophers, physicians, authors, artists, &c:

and as talents and sciences are making daily progress, and naval and military virtues, loyalty, patriotism, and courage, are more fervent than ever, we may look forward to an ample field of merit for us to select new subjects.

Should it, however, be judged more proper, the Gallery may begin from an earlier epoch; as I dare say many bad pictures, though, perhaps, true likenesses of distinguished characters, may be found for our artists to make superior copies from.

The second Gallery also, to be built as soon as the fund is adequate to the expence. This will become the grand object of exertions for the best artists of every description; here the Sculptor will deposit his

busts and statues; the Architect his plans; the Engraver with his prints will enrich the port-folios appropriated for that purpose; the Landscape, Sea, and Architecture Painters will display the grand views of art and nature, whilst the Historical and Battle Painter will record the glorious actions, and brilliant victories of his country.

If ever emulation stimulated genius, it must be on this occasion; not because the works of our artists to be deposited in this Gallery will be liberally paid for out of the fund, which, I suppose, will be increasing in the hands of the Trustees; but because they will be certain of their continuing in that Royal and National Establishment, where they will have an opportunity of transmitting their names to

posterity. By such policy, in the Vatican, and other palaces of Italy, the artist formerly strove with a noble emulation, and produced those chef d'œuvres which command our admiration, and to obtain which the French have lately waded through so much blood, and have not been sparing of their own.

In this second Gallery will also be deposited the patient labours of the Miniature Painter, of the Medalist and Drafts, man, as well as the works of the eminent Female Artist; so that beauty and domestic virtue will also contribute to the fame of an institution, sacred to valour, talents, patriotism, and loyalty.

The third Gallery shall contain Antiques, and first-rate Pictures of the old Masters.

The Trustees will, perhaps, now and then, when opportunity offers, buy a capital picture, but it never entered my mind to fill this by purchases out of the fund: I have carried my expectations further.

Nothwithstanding Great Britain, as I before observed, has not what in other countries is termed a Royal Collection; she is, nevertheless, possessed of more capital pictures than any other in Europe, where the Sovereign, the Princes of the Blood, and a few Courtiers, only can boast of having a collection. Property being more equally divided in Great Britain, most of our nobility and gentry are possessed of a collection; so that, besides the quantity of noble private cabinets we see in the metropolis, an immense

number of pictures are spread in different country houses: and as, since the French Revolution, and the troubles in Flanders, Holland, Germany, and Italy, the importation of pictures from thence into this country has been greater than ever, our collections are daily increasing both in number and refinement. For, as the best wines are imported here on account of the heavy duty, so are the best pictures: since the importer pays equally a guinea per foot on the good and the bad, his profits on the latter would not be equivalent to the customs.

But, although so many pictures have of late been poured into Great Britain, their quantity, instead of lessening, has increased their value. An abundance of the necessaries of life, which must be imbut the longer pictures of esteemed masters are kept, the more valuable they become. Accidents in cleaning, and the injuries of time, daily decrease their number; those, therefore, that are in careful hands must daily increase in their value: and a period will arrive, when many of those pictures which the French Revolution has caused to be brought here, will return to the Continent, where they will be sold for double or triple the price they now cost.

The great number of pictures in a country, by extending taste, increases the number of purchasers; for, by acquiring the knowledge of pictures, men are able to judge of their pecuniary value by their merit; and as soon as they are connoisseurs, they become collectors, some out of love

for the art, many out of vanity, and many more out of speculation.

The abundance of specie in a country does not lessen its value, because it is universally understood, that the usual quantity only is in circulation, and that the abundance we enjoy, occasions a scarcity of it in others. So it is with those first-rate pictures of the old masters: if they are no longer so scarce in Great Britain, they are more so on the Continent from whence they come.

But it is in this instance alone I can compare pictures to gold; for, however precious that metal is, the superiority of fine pictures over it, is beyond comparison. The possessor of gold shares it in common with thousands; but, an origi-

mal picture cannot be in two places, its proprietor may boast its exclusive enjoyment.

Rich as Great Britain at present is, in fine statues, antiques, and pictures, I am so sanguine as to expect, that when the third Gallery shall be erected, the gifts and legacies of individuals will not be wanting to fill it gradually. A connoisseur, who is a true lover of the art, dreads nothing more than the dissolution of his cabinet after his decease: it is natural enough to carry, even beyond life, our attachment to such innocent amusements as have contributed to render it agreeable.

The connoisseur may, it is true, order in his will, that his collection shall not be sold; but the testator, who considers such a restriction necessary, must have perceived that his legacy would give his heir no gratification: it is like bequeathing a man a house, in which he is determined never to live, and which you bind him down neither to let nor sell.

A gentleman some years since, who, I understand, had no near relations, left a collection of considerable value, the sale of which he prohibited by his will, in the most positive and direct terms; it was notwithstanding, sold; as the legislature, doubtless for good reasons, annulled the restriction. I mention the circumstance, only to suggest, that had the establishment I now propose existed at that time, the testator would, probably, have enriched it with the gift of his pictures, which were sold for the comparatively paltry sum of

eight or ten thousand pounds, although a great part of them were immediately after re-sold at a very high price to foreigners, who carried them to Paris, where they are now placed in the new Public Gallery of the Louvre.

Nor is it less probable that the late Earl of Orford, who collected with great judgment, would have bequeathed his pictures to his country; for nothing is more flattering to a collector, than that the objects of his curiosity and amusement should afford pleasure to others. His lordship left them for life to the honourable Mrs. Damer, whose exquisite taste in the fine Arts he well knew.

I must add, that I am myself acquainted with some gentlemen possessed of good

pictures, whom I have heard lament the want of a place where they could order their collections to be deposited.

But will not those bequests to the third Gallery injure a lawful heir, by depriving him of a property he might otherwise inherit? God forbid that I should ever suggest an idea, tending to the hurt of any one! although my opinion is immaterial, as the wisdom of the legislature would not permit the injuring of an individual.

We cannot suppose, that to enrich this establishment, a father, a brother, an uncle, or near relation, will become so unatural as to deprive their kin of a property which they intended for them; but many people have none but distant relations, whom they frequently regard but

little, and are as little regarded by; exclusively of which I cannot see what injury an heir can receive, by being deprived of an object that would give him no gratification, and which himself and his descendants would be bound not to part with.

'Tis also proper I should observe, that, although a whole collection may sometimes be bequeathed to this gallery, it is probable that many lovers of the fine Arts will limit their gifts to two or three favourite pictures, which some will deposit there even in their life-time, so that in a few years, perhaps, this establishment will add a new degree of splendour to his Majesty's reign, and become beneficial to society.

All pictures, however, that may be bequeathed or sent to this establishment, shall not be indiscriminately admitted, as to elevate its reputation: should a collection, therefore, be bequeathed to Montague House, the Trustees, and the Committee appointed by the Royal Academy, should meet, in order to select such pictures, statues, &c. as shall be worthy a place, and under them the donor's name should be written. The remainder of his collection should be sold, towards increasing the fund of the establishment, or to be returned to his family, as the testator should direct.

Before I conclude, I must observe, that I am far from thinking the plan perfect in its present state; I submit it to the Trustees of the British Museum, in the best state it has occured to me, and should they improve it, so far as to carry it into execution, I shall, in some measure, have gratified my sincere attachment to his Majesty and the country, as well as my friendship for several British artists, who, if the plan takes place, will receive encouragement, not only from the Trustees, but from the commonalty at large; for as the different counties generally follow the example of the metropolis, it is probable they will adorn their town-halls with the portraits of their favourite Representatives, Mayors, Sheriffs, Aldermen, and others, who have either honoured or benefited them.

The connoisseur will equally be gratified by finding in Montague House a resource both in the modern and old productions, that are the objects of his research. Several Gentlemen of respectability have almost no other amusement; though fortune, perhaps, may not afford them the means of forming a cabinet, there they will be amply indemnified; for such is the peculiar advantage of the Fine Arts, that their productions, when properly taken care of, without losing any of their qualities, give daily pleasure to thousands, and will afford the same to future generations.

The following are, in my opinion, the objections which may be made to the plan:—

That as part of the British Museum consists of small articles, which must be minutely inspected, they can be seen only by a select company at a time, and not by a crowd of people, as is usual in public exhibitions; it was in consideration of

porary room for the portraits, till there should be a sufficient fund to erect the first Gallery, as then the new establishment may become perfectly distinct from the old one: nothing can be more easy than to arrange the articles I have just mentioned, in a private room, where small parties only, as usual, may be admitted at a time.

The other objection is, levying money at the door of Montague House, to this I have to quote the example of the Academy, a Royal Institution, whose exhibition brings yearly a large sum in the course of five weeks; we, surely, may expect to raise a superior one during eight months, from the Royal and National Establishment I propose, which will be so interest-

ing to the nation at large, and patronized by the legislature; but should it bring only a similar sum, it would, in the course of four or five years, be in a state of forwardness.

Let those who disapprove of the entrance money, consider the trivialness of that objection to a plan, which is to procure gradually an establishment of the utmost grandeur, utility, and value.

Let them reflect that Italy exists no more, and that Great Pritain, which may so justly aspire to the honour of indemnifying Europe for so great loss, would, by such policy, acquire the highest degree of splendour; that already possessed of many chef d'œuvres of sculpture, and such master-pieces of art, as the Banquetting

House, St. Paul's, Blenheim, Greenwich Hospital, Somerset House, the Bank, and other public buildings, the want of Public Galleries of Pictures is the more sensibly felt.

The plan I have offered is simple and easy, and although still capable of improvement, is, in its present state, neither burthensome to government or to individuals, is far from being injurious to commerce, or a clog to the operations of the war; and without a possibility of its being detrimental, it offers a probability of advantages, far more than equivalent to the objection against entrance-money.

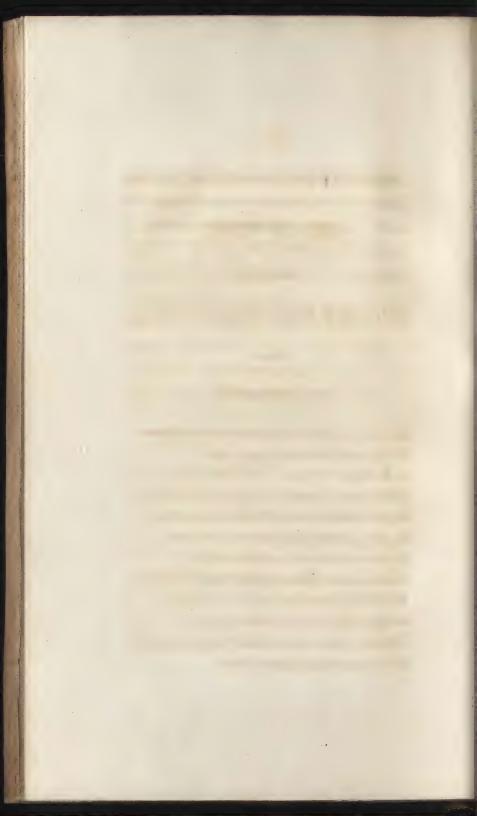
After the most mature consideration, I have not found any other means of accomplishing it. I could not think of an appli-

cation to the Legislature for the necessary sum, as I know the State money is applied to the support of the State; and I laid aside the idea of a subscription, for, although the fortune of every individual is at his own disposal, no subscription should be raised but for public exigencies, or the relief of the poor. In fact, when we induce a friend to subscribe a sum for an object of amusement, we deter him from subscribing it for a necessary one.

Nor can I flatter myself, although the plan may meet with the approbation of many, that it would be supported by a subscription adequate to the expence of carrying it into execution. Last year, when every class of men were voluntarily arming themselves on the mere report of an invasion, multitudes subscribed to the

voluntary contribution; but it was in defence of their King and country, therefore, to support their nearest interests; and however dear the Fine Arts may be to Britons, I cannot expect they are as dear to them as their Constitution.





# FRENCH VERSES

WRITTEN BY

# THE LATE NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

# LA RÉLIGION.

Les mains pleines de fleurs, et le front ceint d'olive,
Elle donne la paix aussitôt quelle arrive.
Le pauvre et l'opulent sont égaux à ses yeux,
Pour quiconque l'implore elle descend des lieux.
Son bras vient soutenir les rois dans les allarmes;
Sa main du malheureux vient essuyer les larmes.
Et par son ministère elle peut en tout lieu
Gérer un sainte commerce entre l'homme et son Dieu;
Mais l'affligé surtout trouve en elle une amie
Qui partage avec lui les peines de la vie.
Quand parmi vingt bourreaux l'infortuné Louis
De son auguste sang rassassia Paris,

Elle alla (tout en pleurs de l'outrage et du crime) Sur l'echafau rébel consoler la victime. C'est elle qui toujours console l'opprimé, L'innocent dans les fers de douleur abîmé; Les enfans asservis à la marâtre austère, Le fils déshérité par un injuste père. Le noble fugitif et l'errant émigré Qu'un trop funeste sort persecute à son gré! Oui, oui, dans le malheur, au plus fort de l'orage, La Religion seule inspire du courage. Quand l'espoir est éteint, l'homme reste abbatu, Elle lui rend l'espoir quand il a tout perdu. C'est elle qui du vice éloigne la jeunesse, Qui garde l'age mûr, et soutient la vieillesse. Aux champs comme à la ville, au desert, à la cour, Partout où nous voulons elle fait son séjour. Plus prompte que l'éclair cette vierge fidelle Se rend avec ferveur à la voix qui l'appelle. Elle quitte le ciel pour aller à la fois Prier sous l'humble chaume et sous le dais des rois; Pour aller rendre au jour la mère inconsolable Prête à joindre au tombeau l'enfant le plus aimable. Pour aller sécourir l'infirme et l'indigent, Le coupable en remords, et le juste expirant;

Le monarque vainçu, sa famille en ôtage;

Le marin aux abois sur le bord du naufrage;

Le ministre souffrant dans un indigne exil;

Le voyageur sans guide au milieu du péril;

D'un tiran soupçonneux la tendre et chaste épouse,
(Quand le monstre se livre à sa fureur jalouse):

Elle sécourt aussi la veuve au désespoir;

Le héros qu'un brigand soumet à son pouvoir;

La trop crédule amante à la merci d'un taître,

L'esclave languissant sous les rigueurs d'un maître;

Le père dépendant d'un fils superbe et vain,

Et le frère accablé par un frère inhumain.

Aux foibles qu'on outrage, aux grands qu'on calomnie, À la jeune beauté que dénirge l'envie, Au timide orphélin que dépouille un tuteur, Elle apprend à souffrir sans plainte et sans aigreur: Enfin, sur tous nos maux comme une tendre mère Elle verse en secret, un beaume salutaire.

Viens donc, fille du Ciel; habitez parmi nous; Viens!...aux pieds des autels je t'attends à genous.

#### À MONSIEUR LE PRINCE DE MASSERAN.

Pour avoir massacré d'innombrables mortels,
On mit au rang des Dieux Alexandre et Achille;
On sera Masseran, qui par des soins fidelles,
En sauve l'autre jour trois ou quatre cens mille.

### À MADAME LA PRINCESSE DE MASSERAN.

JE dormais; je songeois que le maître des Dieux Amenoit ici bas les Graces à nos jeux. De l'excès du plaisir mon esprit prend l'essor; Je m'éveille; vous vois; et crois dormir encore.

À MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE CRÉVE-CŒUR.

Les Dieux démentent le nom que le sort t'a donné;

Car ils ont sur ton front imprimé la bonté.

Mais si tu tiens de lui, c'est qu'un jour ta valeur

Aux rivaux de ton roi prétend créver le cœur.

\* Prince Massaran was the Spanish ambassador. He prevented a war from taking place between France and this country.

#### MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE GUINES.

Pour venir honorer nos puérils jeux,

Quoi! quitter encore et Cythère et les Dieux!

Vous, qu'en conseil des Dieux tous les jours on appelle

Et pours qui tous les jours, Cythère est en querelle!

#### A MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE JULIAC.

TES exploits de Louis t'acquirent la faveur, Louis marqua ton sein du sceau de la valeur.

# A MADAME LA COMTESSE DE GROVENSTIEN.

Quoi? Parmi des fanords, dans des marais stériles,
Les Ris et les Amours ont été vous former?

C'étoit assez sans doute. Et pourquoi si facile
Ici vous attirer?

Quand on est aussi belle,

On fait bientôt tourner aux Anglais la cervelle.

\* A Dutch lady of rank.

### À MADEMOISELLE DE GROVENSTIEM.

Belle Grovenstien, O! vous que rien n'efface Prenez garde à l'Amour, il vous suit à la trace.

#### MISS KECK.

HERODIAS obtint la tête d'un grand homme Pour avoir sçû danser; et Vénus une pomme : Si l'on payait ainsi vos pas, et vos atraits, Jersey seroit sans fruits, et le roi sans sujets.

#### MISS VERNON.

Douce et belle Vernon, vous avez de l'esprit,
Des talens, et de la mémoire:
Tout le monde le sçait, tout le monde le dit;
Vous seule n'en voulez rien croire.

#### MISS FANNY JENNINGS.

Vous nous embarrassez, jeune et tendre Fanny: Votre sœur est charmante; et vous l'êtes aussi. Qui choisir de vous deux? L'amour vous ressembloit; Et votre sœur ressemble à celle qu'il armoit.

#### MISS JENNINGS.

LES Ris, les Graces, la Jeunesse,
Accompagnent partout tes pas.
Les Plaisirs te suivent sans cesse:
Il n'en est point où tu n'est pas.

#### A MADAME MORANT.

On peint l'Amour aveugle : et pourquoi pas sa mère ?
On diroit, en voyant vos yeux,
Que la Déesse de Cythère
Vous a donné les siens ; car ils en ont les feux.

### À MADAME-

Venus en vous formant, prit l'Amour pour modelle, Votre frère aujourd'hui vous couvre de son aile.

### À MADAME LA COMTESSE DE MALTZAN.

Vous, qui fort jeune encore voulutes être semme; Et que semme, cent sois, si l'on doit vous en croire, Eutes pour un couvent la plus ardente flamme;

De vos foibles enfans voyez maître la gloire,

Et convenez enfin que l'hymen en détail

Vaut mieux que les verrouils d'un saint et froid serrail.

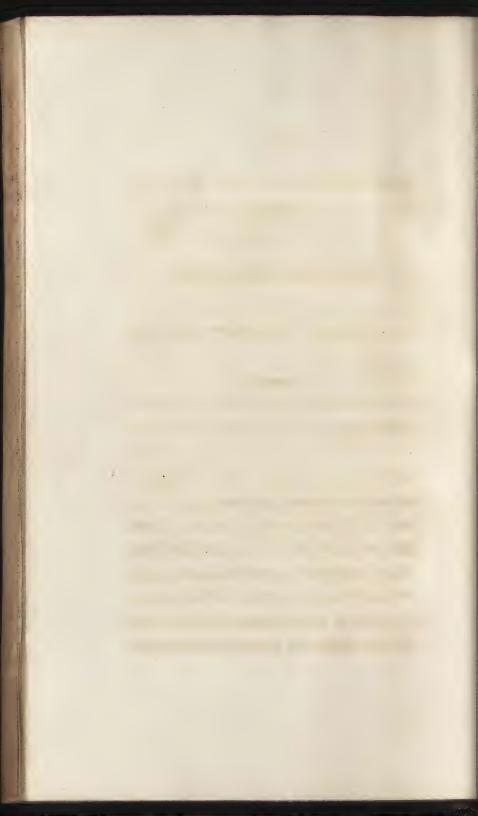
### A MONSIEUR LE COMTE DE MALTZAN.

O! toi que la nature a donné d'un cœur tendre, Verse aujourd'hui les pleurs que la joie fait repandre.

### A MONSIEUR DE MELLO.

Tor qui plais à la ville, et qui plais à la cour, Tantôt homme d'état, tantôt homme d'amour! Quoi! lorsque les Plaisirs disputent tes momens, Tu daignes les donner à des Jeux innocens?





### LETTRE

DE

## MONSIEUR DESENFANS,

A

# MADAME MONTAGUE.

MADAME,

Vous avez honoré notre siécle, d'avoir pris en main la défense de Shakespeare, la base et l'aigle du théâtre Anglois. Votre zèle pour la vérité, cet auguste caractère d'une belle ame; un discernement exquis et votre plume énergique, en lui rendant la justice la plus frappante, vous ont fait un nom parmi les gens de lettres, et une réputation qu'un savoir distingué et la réconnoissance rendront recommandable dans tous les temps.

Mais, Madame, ne soutintes-vous la cause honorable de ce génie supérieur, que pour venger un compatriote? non: c'étoit pour venger le mérite, ce compatriote commun aux savans, et qui toujours cher aux gens de bien, trouve son pays par toute la terre, dans le cercle étroit des vrais sages.

Ce sentiment qui vous élève au-dessus des préjugés nationaux, fait aujourd'hui ma confiance en vous, et m'est un gage que vous ne blâmerez point en moi, le desir brûlant d'effacer une tâche qu'un Anglois vient de faire à la gloire d'un de nos écrivains aussi respectable par ses rares vertus, que célébre par sa profonde érudition. Oui, Madame, vous avez justifié avec trop de feu, votre immortel Shakespeare, pour désapprouver un tribut si légitime à la mémoire adorée de notre immortel Fénélon; si l'un est l'amour et l'orgueil de votre nation, l'autre est le flambeau de nos Rois et l'honneur de la nôtre.

On connoît assez quel est le destin ordinaire du grand homme; le rebut et l'abandon ne sont pas toujours la seule moisson de ses veilles et de ses lumières. Trop souvent pour prix de sa sagesse, il est en bute aux traits aigus du méchant; et ceux qui ne dévroient lever les yeux sur lui qu' avec un saint respect, sont les premiers à cabaler contre lui et à ourdir sa ruine. Cet essaim vénimeux acharné à sa perte, se soulève et répand à grands flots, la puissante calomnie et la dangéreuse prévention. Le vil envieux, le fourbe, l'étourdi, l'ignorant, le savant même, le persécutent sans relâche, et font de lui un sujet éternel de satire et de mépris.

Voilà, Madame, quel est le lot trop commun de ces hommes éminens que le ciel nous donne dans sa bonté, et dont il est avare pour punir notre ingratitude, en nous laissant replonger dans les ténébres épaisses du vice et de l'ignorance, que dissipoient leurs lumières et leurs vertus.

Hélas! nous crions au mérite, et semblons vôler audevant de lui; mais c'est à contre-cœur que la plûpart lui rendent hommage; et à l'instant qu'on l'exalte, à l'instant même qu'on lui brûle un peu d'encens, on brûle de l'abbaisser. Ainsi tel tend les bras et offre un asile au philosophe, qui voudroit l'avoir étouffé au berceau; ou' tel qui pour se donner un relief, le protège aujourd'hui, s'élancera demain contre lui s'il est hors de mode; car un grand homme a sa vogue pour un peu de temps, comme un bête curieuse qu'on amène d'une contrée lointaine; le premier jour c'est un éléphant, c'est un Rhinocéros pour qui il faut fendre la presse; et le troisième, dégénéré en fourmi, il n'est plus que l'oubli, ou la fable et la critique de tous ces milliers de curieux qu'emporte le tourbillon de frivoles nouveautés.

L'aimons-nous donc, Madame, ce mérite tant vanté? Oui nous l'aimons, mais presque toujours nous ne l'aimons qu'en nous. Notre premier mobile, ce sentiment souvérain d'amour propre qui tient les rênes de notre cœur, en le rendant importun à la basse jalousie, souvent nous le fait haïr dans les autres; et celui du poëte dont vous épousates le parti, étoit trop éclatant pour que la satire ne se déchainât pas contre lu i.

Mais Mr. de Voltaire en att quant Shakespeare, n'a attaqué en lui que l'homme de
lettres, et a respecté l'honnête homme; ici
c'est l'honnête homme qu'on attaque et
qu'on déchire; c'est l'honneur, son spanage sacré, qu'on lui enlève; c'est un bien
auquel on a des droits au-delà même du
trepas: un bien inestimable que tous les
lauriers des muses ne sauroient compenser.
Il importe peu sans doute d'avoir su faire
des vers, de la bonne ou de la mauvaise
prose, quand on descend chez les morts;
mais mort ou vivant, il importe d'avoir
une réputation sans tâche.

J'avois lu les lettres de Milord Chester-field, et comme elles étoient annoncées pour un plan d'éducation, j'avois passé légèrement sur tout ce qui ne m'y parut point analogue. Je les repris il y a quelques jours, pour lire celles que j'avois d'abord omises; mais quel fut mon étonnement, quand parvenu à la deux-cens soixante-unième, je vis Milord souiller impito yablement la mémoire du sage Fénélon: et d'après une lettre qu'il avoit trouvée dans le recueil de la Marquise de Maintenon, le charger avec animosité, d'avoir prostitué cette dame à Louis XIV!

Je savois que l'illustre auteur de Télémaque avoit eu des ennemis; mais je savois aussi que ces mêmes ennemis en combattant ses erreurs, s'il en eut, avoient été forcés de respecter ses mœurs; et je n'ima-

ginai pas comment une infamie aussi noire, et tramée au sein de la cour, auroit pû tôt ou tard, échapper à la malignité de ses persécuteurs, tous courtisans, gens aux yeux de linx. Dailleurs étoit-il probable que celui qui a su rendre la vertu si aimable, l'ait aimée si peu que de l'avilir si fort? Et faudra-t-il croire qu'un homme estimé de tout son siécle, estimé même de ses envieux, n'ait été qu'un monstre à mettre en pieces, parcequ'il aura plû à Milord Chesterfield de donner de l'équivoque à quelques mots.? non sans doute: et de quelque poids que dût m'être son autorité, je ne pus me résoudre à donner tête baissée, dans son opinion; en outre déjà sa légèreté à juger d'autrui, m'avoit appris à le regarder plutôt comme un de ces moucherons qui piquent et qui bourdonnent, que comme un de ces sages qui tournent et rétournent la langue avant de décider.

Mais bientôt je fus éclairci par la lettre même qu'il avoit cru un sujet suffisant pour se répandre en injures atroces; et je vis que Milord qui peut-être savoit sur le bout du doigt, les œuvres de Bolinbrooke, entendoit très-peu la génése; et que si dans un bal il pouvoit juger en maître, d'une révérence ou d'un entre-chat, il falloit dans ce cas-ci, des lumières plus infaillibles que les siennes.

J'ai gémi néanmoins qu'une fletrissure aussi deshonorante pour le souvenir du vertueux Fénélon, aît été empreinte par la main téméraire d'un homme que de vastes connoissances ont distingué, et dont les principes solides et brillans de politique et de politesse, feront peut-être passer l'ouvrage à la postérité, et avec lui la calomnie la plus insigne; ôr vous saves combien une plume éloquente accélère ses funestes progrès, et combien vîte elle gagne un avocat secret dans les cœurs où elle perce!

Ah! qu'il est triste, Madame, qu'il est humiliant pour l'humanité, que des hommes dangéreux aient des talens qui mettent l'opinion dans leurs mains, et les font pour ainsi dire, arbîtres de la gloire, en les rendant les oracles d'un peuple crédule qu'ils abbreuvent de mensonge et d'erreurs. Trop souvent gonflés de fiel et d'orgueil, ces professeurs d'imposture ne caractérisent que d'après leurs passions; ou vuides de jugement, ils défigurent, blâment et préconisent à tort et à travers; et leur bouche profane souffle alors dan tous les esprits, le

préjugé et la confusion. De-là tant d'historiens suspects; de-là tant de faquins et de pédans ont passé pour des Socrates; de-là le lâche couronné de chêne, et tant de brigands le front ceint d'un laurier qu'avoit cueilli la valeur, nous ont été donnés pour des héros.

Cette réflexion est dure, et pourroit être décourageante pour la vertu; mais quand le caprice, l'iniquité, l'ignorance font avorter les soins qu'elle donne à sa gloire, Dieu qui de son doigt immortel, la grave dans une tablette aussi durable que la nôtre est futile, lui montre les hommes, leurs vaines annales, leurs satires, leurs éloges, leurs écrits pompeux et leurs traditions s'engloutissans dans le gouffre énorme de l'éternité. Mais pardon, Madame, je reviens à mon sujet.

Je fus donc convainçu à l'instant qu'il y avoit autant de ridicule que de malice ou d'ignorance dans le tour que Milord Chesterfield s'étoit efforcé de donner à la lettre de Mr. de Fénélon, qui je suppose, ne vous est pas étrangère; mais il est à propos que je vous la remette sous les yeux. C'est la clxxxv des mémoires de Madame Maintenon à qui elle est adressée.

"Le zèle pour le salut du roi ne doint point vous faire aller au de-là des bornes que la Providence semble vous avoir marquées: il faut attendre les momens que Dieu seul peut connoître. Le vrai moïen d'attirer la grace de Dieu sur le roi, n'est pas de le fatiguer par des exhortations, mais de l'édifier, d'entrer peu-à-peu dans son cœur par une conduite douce et patiente. Votre application à lui toucher le

cœur, à lui ouvrir les yeux, à le garantir de certains piéges, à lui donner des conseils de paix, de modération, de soulagement pour ses peuples, d'amour pour l'église, et votre zèle à chercher de bons pasteurs, démandent de vous de grandes attentions et beaucoup de prudence. Vous êtes la sentinelle de Dieu au milieu d'Israël. Aimez le roi; sovez lui soumise, comme Sara l'étotit à Abraham. Respectez le du fonds du cœur : regardez-le comme votre Seigneur dans l'ordre de Dieu. Il est vrai, Madame, que votre état est une énigme; mais ce'st Dieu qui l'a fait : vous ne l'avez pas désiré; vous ne l'avez pas choisi, pas même imaginé; c'est Dieu qui l'a fait; il vous cache ses secrets, et en cache aussi au public qui le surprendroient, si vous les lui disiez comme à moi : c'est le mistère de Dieu: il a voulu que vous fussiez élévés

pour sanctifier ceux qui naissent dans l'élévation. Vous êtes à la place des reines: et vous n'avez pas plus de liberté ni d'autorité qu'une petite bourgeoise.

A présent voici ce que Milord dit de cette lettre dans sa cclui à son fils.\*

\* Je joins ici l'original pour montrer que je l'ai suivi avec exactitude dans ma traduction.

My dear Friend,

Since my last to you, I have read Madame Maintenon's Letters; and am sure they are genuine, and they both entertained and informed me. They have brought me acquainted with the character of that able and artful lady; whom I am convinced that I now know, much better than her directeur the Abbé de Fenelon (afterwards archbishop of Cambray) did, when he wroteher the 185th letter; and I know him the better too for that letter. The Abbé, though brimful of the divine love, had a great mind to be first minister, and cardinal, in order, no doubt, to have the opportunity of doing the more good. His being directeur

- " Mon cher Ami,
- " Depuis ma dernière, j'ai lu les lettres de Madame Maintenon, et suis assûré

at that time to Madame Maintenon, seemed to be a good step towards those views. She puts herself upon him for a saint, and he was weak enough to believe it, he, on the other hand, would have put himself upon her for a saint too, which, I dare say, she did not believe; but both of them knew that it was necessary for them to appear saints to Lewis XIV. who they were very sure was a bigot. It is to be presumed, nay, indeed, it is plain by that 185th letter, that Madame Maintenon had hinted to her directeur some scruples of conscience, with relation to her commerce with the king; and which I humbly apprehend to have been only some scruples of prudence, at once to flatter the bigot character, and increase the desires of the King. The pious Abbé frightened out of his wits, lest the king should impute to the directeur any scruples or difficulties which he might meet with on the part of the lady, writes her the above-mentioned letter; in which he not only bids her not to teaze the king by advice and exortations, but to have the utmost submission to his will; and, that she qu'elles sont originales. Non-seulement elles m'ont amusé, mais aussi elles m'ont

may not mistake the nature of that submission, he tells her, it is the same that Sarah had for Abraham; to which submission Isaac perhaps was owing. No bawd could have written a more seducing letter to an innocent country girl, than the directeur did to his penitent; who, I dare say, had no occasion for his good advice. Those who would justify the good directeur, alias the pimp, in this affair, must not attempt to do it by saying, that the king and Madame Maintenon were at that time privately married; that the directeur knew it; and that this was the meaning of his enigme. That is absolutely impossible; for that private marriage must have removed all scruples between the parties; nay, could not have been contracted on any other principle since it was kept private, and consequently prevented no public scandal. It is therefore extemely evident, that Madame Maintenen could not be married to the king, at the time when she scrupled granting, and when the directeur advised her to grant, those favours which Sarah with so much submission granted to Abraham: and what the directeur is pleased to call le mystère de Dieu, was most evidently a state of concubinage.

instruit ; je leur dos sur-tout de pouvoir apprécier cette femme habile et artificieuse qu à n'en pas douter, je connois à présent beaucoup mieux que ne la connoissoit son directeur Mr. l'Abbé de Fénélon (ensuite archevêque de Cm brai), lorsqu'il lu écrivit la cent quatre vingt-cinquième lettre; et cette lettre me le fit aussi connoître lui-même plus à fonds. Le zélé abbé quoique rempli à l'excès de l'amour divin, aspiroit à devenir premier ministre et cardinal, afin sans doute de pouvoir rendre les plus grands services. Il étoit alors directeur de Madame de Maintenon : et cette qualité sembloit favoriser ses vûes. Elle joua auprès de lui le rôle d'une sainte, et il fut assez idiot que de la croire telle. De son côté, il désiroit aussi qu'elle ne vît en lui le qu'un saint homme, mais je puis assûrer qu'elle ne fut pas sa dupe. Cependant tous deux savoient qu'il étoit de leur intérêt de paroître tels aux yeux de Louis XIV. qu'ils connoissoient pour un parfait bigot.

"Il est à présumer, et en vérité il est évident par la lettre cent quatre vingtcinquième, que Madame de Maintenon avoit fait paroitre à son directeur une délicatesse de conscience sur son commerce avec le roi, et lui avoit marqué quelques scrupules que j'appellerai scruples de prudence, afin de flatter l'humeur dévote du monarque, et d'enflammer ses désirs.

"Le pieux abbé hors de lui-même, effrayé que sa Majesté n'attribuât au directeur les scrupules et les obstacles que la pénitente opposeroit à sa passion, lui écrivit la susditte lettre par laquelle il lui recommande de ne pas tourmenter le roi à force de conseils et exortations, mais de se soumettre entièrement à sa volonté; et afin de ne lui laisser aucun doute sur la sorte de soumission dont il parloit, il lui dit que c'est la même que Sara avoit pour Abraham; soumission à laquelle il est probable qu'Isaac dut le jour. Non: il n'y a pas de débaucheuse qui auroit pu suborner une innocente paysanne par une lettre plus séduisante.

"Que ceux qui voudroient justifier ce bon directeur, autrement dit ce debaucheur, ne s'y autorisent pas en alléguant que le roi et Madame de Maintenon étoient mariés secrettement; que Mr. de Fénélon les avoit, et que voilà la clef de l'énigme. Cela est absolument impossible, car un mariage secret auroit étoutse toute espêce de scrupule; et même il ne pouvoit avoir eu lieu que pour cela, puisqu'étant tenu secret il n'empechoit pas le scandal public. Par conséquent il est clair comme le jour, que Madame de Maintenon ne pouvoit pas, être l'épous du roi lorsque ses scrupules la faisoient hésiter à se livrer à lui, et lorsque le directeur lui conseilloit d'accorder à sa majesté les mêmes faveurs que Sara avoit accordées à Abraham avec tant de soumission. Ainsi ce qu'il appelle le mystère de Dieu, n'étoit absolument qu'un concubinage, &c.''

Vous l'entendez, Madame! et vous conviendrez que ce ton tranchant d'autorité, et cet air affirmatif qui en imposent, sont d'un poids qui fait pancher à la prévention; et c'est ainsi pourtant qu'avec une poignée de paille, un habile artiste va faire un phantôme qui répandra la terreur.

D' abord, où Milord a-t-il puisé dans la lettre de Mr. de Fénélon qu'il ait été question de scrupules? Et n'auroit-il pas du plus scrupuleux lui même, la prendre dans le sens simple et naturel qu'elle présente? Pourquoi aussi des faveurs, et toujours des faveurs? Venoit-il de brigues celles de Madame \* \* \* \* \* pour les avoir si fort en tête à ce moment là? et depuis quand recommander aux femmes la soummission envers leurs maris, signifie-t-il que c'est les débaucher ? lui-même lorsqu'il engageoit son fils à suborner celles de ses amis, se servoit il de cette expression?.. Mais à mon tour il me siéroit peu d'en employer d'injurieuses; et je ferai mieux d'analiser les périodes nécessaires de la lettre, pour dévoiler par là d'un bout à l'autre, l'absurdité du critique.

Le commencement loin de prouver que Mr. de Fénélon l'écrivit au sujet de quelques scrupules, prouve évidemment que c'étoit en réponse à Madame de Maintenon qui connoissant ses lumières et sûre de son zèle. lui avoit sans doute démandé des conseils pour rétirer Louis XIV. de ses égaremens; chaque ligne suffit pour m'en convaincre, et deux motifs de plus me le confirment. L'un est son extrême confiance en lui que manifeste l'éloge continuel qu'elle en fait dans le cours de ses mémoires; et l'autre est dans la cclxxix lettre, où elle dit à Mademoiselle d'Aumale que son dessein et ses soins les plus chers étoient de corriger le roi de ses passions.

Milord, qui ne voit dans Mr. de Fénélon qu'un tartuffe, et un architartuffe dans la Marquise, appelleroit cela un rôle de théatre rempli par une excellente comédienne; mais parceque les gens qui ont la jaûnisse ne voient souvent tous les objets qu'en jaûne, et que ceux qui ont des principes relâchés, jugent d'un relâchement universel, croirai-je sur la parole du malade, que le cigne est de safran, et sur la parole du libertin, que la vertu n'est que simagrée?

Je croirai et dirai que Madame de Maintenon avoit communiqué ses vuës à son directeur afin qu'il y travaillât de concert avec elle; et qu'ayant soumis à sa prudence, les mesures qu'elle avoit prises pour y parvenir, celui-ci les crut trop violentes, et craignit qu'elles ne fîssent échouer son ouvrage ébauché; c'est pourquoi il lui prescrit ce que la sagesse elle-même prescriroit dans les premiers pas; beaucoup

délicatesse et de modération. Il lui recommande de ne point accabler le roi de remontrances fastidieuses qui toujours dégoûtent et rébutent; mais d'employer la douceur et la patience qui presque toujours persuadent et viennent à bout. Il lui dit de le toucher par sa piété et sa conduite : de lui ouvrir les yeux à force de vertus: de l'édifier à force de bonnes œuvres ; et Milord Chesterfield voudra que Mr. de Fénélon aît conseillé à sa pénitente, de se prostituer à lui afin de l'édifier? Drôle de chemin en vérité, pour ramener les gens à Dieu! Edification assez amusante, dont Londres et Paris, graces à la débauche, ne manqueront pas de sitôt.

Mais pour supposer que la Marquise avoit témoigné des scrupules à son directeur, et qu'il lui écrivoit pour les appaiser, il faudra donc croire qu'ils n'étoient fêlatifs qu' au roi; et que quant à elle, peu
alarmée d'un commerce criminel, elle ne
craignoit pas de se perdre; mais qu'elle
craignoit que lui seul n'offensât Dieu et ne
se perdit. En effet: si ses scrupules
l'avoient concernée, Mr. de Fénélon pouvoit-il lui dire le zèle pour le salut du roi,
ne doit point, &c.? non: et il est simple
qu'il auroit dit le zèle pour votre salut.
Voilà ce qui saute aux yeux dès la première ligne; et voilà ce qui a échappé à
Milord. Mais continuons un moment sur
les prétendus scrupules.

Je viens de prouver qu'ils ne pouvoient avoir que le roi seul pour objet. Dans ce cas donc il est à présumer que la Marquise n'aura pas manqué de défaites aux propositions trop libres du monarque passionné? et que lui parlant des anges quand il lui parloit de Cupidon, elle aura fondé ses refus sur une conscience assaillie de la peur qu'il ne se damnât! et on pourroit donner dans cette absurdité! et on en croiroit capable Madame de Maintenon!

Une Agnés, à sa place, l'Agnés la plus idiote: une bégueule; une nonne toute cicatricée de sa discipline, et qui auroit grisonné sous les verroux d'un cloître, ne tiendroient jamais un langage aussi sot; et il faudra qu'il sorte de la bouche d'une femme célébre, qui sans crédit, sans fortune et dans l'automne de sa beauté, étoit montée par son esprit à la confiance d'un prince qui lui-même n'en manquoit pas! oui: si les plumes les plus autentiques de son siécle me l'assûroient, j'aurois peine à les en croire.

Une autre rémarque qui révolte également la probité et le bon sens, va du premier coup d'œil, couvrir Milord de ridicule. Il lève son front d'airain, et dans le bouillant d'une effronterie dont j'ai vû peu d'exemples, il essaye de faire passer Mr. de Fénélon pour une fourbe, en l'accusant d'avoir voulu se faire passer pour un saint. Pour un Saint! et auprès de qui? auprès de sa pénitente; et afin de se mettre auprès d'elle en odeur de sainteté, il commence à se sanctifier par l'infamie la plus criante; ou plutôt, pour lui prouver combien il aime la vertu, il lui conseille d'abandonner la sienne; et pour la convaincre qu'il inspire la sagesse, il lui ordonne un concubinage!

Et qu'on n'objecte pas qu'en agissant de la sorte, le directeur s'y prenoit avec et la vertu! Une fille de quinze ans ne tomberoit point dans un piége aussi grossier; le plus pésant de nos capucins riroit d'une ruse aussi platte: et Mr. de Fénélon, Mr. de Fénélon lui-même auroit été assez borné que de la tenter auprès de Madame de Maintenon? Milord prétend qu'il la connoissoit fort peu; mais il la connoissoit assez pour ne pas la croire femme à donner dans un tel panneau.

J'irai plus loin, Madame; j'accorderai que la marquise aît eu, ou aît feint d'avoir des scruples. Un mariage secret prévientil les jugemens malins d'un public qui ne cherche qu'à morde? non sans doute: et Milord en convient; il êtoit donc naturel qu'elle aît des scruples! Non des scruples issus d'un commerce criminel qui n'existoit

pas; mais de la crainte que son mariage ne causât du scandal.

Je le répète: la lettre de Mr. de Fénélon ne donne nulle part, lieu de présumer qu'il l'écrivit au sujet d'aucuns scrupules; mais d'après les portraits qu'on nous a laissés de Madame de Maintenon, il est vrai semblable qu'elle lui en aît maquéquelques-uns; de réels, si elle étoit dévote comme on l'a dit; de feints, si suivant les rapports vagues, c'étoit une femme ambitieuse qui n'aspiroit qu'à se faire déclarer reine. Dans l'un ou l'autre cas il est probable, je l'avoue, qu'il aît s'agi de scrupules; mais si l'orgueil, ce grand ressort des passions humaines, les faisoit naître, la politique à son aîde, aura fait jouer tous les siens pour en tirer profit; et Madame de Maintenon qui connoissoit la délicatesse

de son directeur, lui aura étalé toute la sienne avec emphase, dans l'espoir d'un prétexte de retraite qui en alarmant l'amour du roi, la fît atteindre à son but.

Mais que la Marquise aît agi d'adresse ou à la bonne foi auprès de Mr. de Fénélon; qu'elle lui aît exposé des scrupules, ou qu'il n'en aît point été question; loin de trouver rien dans sa lettre qui puisse l'avilir, tout ce que j'y vois, l'élève à mes yeux et augmente ma vénération. J'y trouve les avis d'un ami éclairé, et à ses soins paternels je reconnois la tutelle de la saggesse. J'y vois régner partout la droiture et la sincérité; partout j'y vois pour guide, la main officieuse de la piété qui vient de prendre conseil chez la prudence.

Instruit à coup sûr, du mariage secrét

de sa pénitente, Mr. de Fénélon lui donne pour modèle de conduite à l'égard du roi, la conduite de Sara à l'égard d'Abraham; et c'est ici que Milord tout gonfle monte sur ses échasses, pour nous dire d'un ton de docteur, en quoi consistoit cette conduite et quelle étoit l'origine d'Isaac. Mais comme il s'agit aussi peu de savoir comment Isaac nâquit, que d'apprendre comment Isaac mourut, je ne m'arrêterai qu'à la manière dont notre critique a déchiffré l'exemple de Sara. Quoi! le suivre, suivre l'exemple d'une épouse vertueuse, c'étoit se prostituer! En vérité, le feu monte au visage quand on songe à une telle interprétation, et qu'on songe qu'elle est de Milord Chesterfield: de ce ministre d'un discernement si juste dans les affaires, et si digne d'être à la tête d'un cabinet; oui, on rougit pour lui, de croire qu'un

homme si grand dans un conseil, auroit été si petit dans une école.

Abraham craignit que la beauté de Sara, sa femme légitime, ne lui fût funeste. Il alloit entrer en Egypte avec elle; et prévoyant que les Egyptiens seroient épris de ses charmes, il s'imagina que peut-être ils le tueroient, s'ils venoient à savoir qu'il étoit son mari; ainsi il lui commanda de dire qu'elle étoit sa sœur,\* et c'est en cela indubitablement que Mr. de Fénélon prescrivit à la Marquise d'imiter Sara. Sara épouse d'Abraham passoit pour sa sœur selon l'ordre d'Abraham. Vous êtes l'épouse du roi : mais ne passez pas pour telle, selon l'ordre du roi; et alors vous serez soumise au roi, comme Sara l'étoit à Abraham. Régardez le, lui

<sup>·</sup> Gen. Chap. xii.

dit-il, comme votre seigneur dans l'ordre de Dieu: c'est à dire, obéissez lui puisque Dieu veut que les femmes obéissent à leurs maris. Votre état, ajoute-t-il, est une énigme. C'est à dire, vous êtes mariée; et on l'ignore: on ignore si vous êtes l'épouse ou la maîtresse du roi; et le public, que vous secrets suprendroient si vous les lui disiez comme à moi, conjecture, dévine et s'y perd. Mais c'est le mistère de Dieu; ce qui signifie, que Dieu dont on doit adorer les décrets, laissoit des obstacles à elle inconnus pour qu'on la déclarât reine.

Voilà je crois, quel est le sens, et le sens unique dans lequel on puisse prendre les phrases que je viens de citer; et je deffie le Cicéron le plus raffiné: je deffie la subtilité même de leur en donner un autre, sans franchir les bornes de la raison. J'en appelle à vous, Madame, qui savez juger si sainement; et sans recourir même à des lumières aussi élévées que les vôtres, il me suffiroit d'en appeller à quiconque a un grain d'entendement et d'équité. Faut-il l'ame de feu et l'œil perçant de Milord Mansfield, pour trouver la vérité quand elle se presente à nous? et quand elle-même hausse la voix, faut-il la tonnante éloquence de Milord Chatham, pour la faire entendre?

J'allois finir: et j'échappois une observation. Si la Marquise n'avoit point été mariée avec Louis XIV. pourquoi Mr. de Fénélon auroit-il nommé son état une énigme? celui d'une fille entretenue qui tous les soirs, ouvre sa porte à regret à son intéressé bienfaiteur, est-il une énigme fort

obscure? de jolies femmes qui de leur toilette, créent des ministres d'état, ou cassent les généraux d'une armée, et aux pieds de qui l'ambitieux va soupirer pour une mître, ou pour une aulne et demie de ruban, sont-elles des énigmes bien impénétrables? non: et on sait trop au prix honteux de quelles saveurs, elles paient la faveur des rois. La Marquise de Verneuil en France, du régne d'Henri IV; la Duchesse de Portsmouth en Angleterre, durant celui de Charles II; et quelques autres que je pourrois nommer d'un temps moins éloigné, ont passé publiquement pour ce qu'elles étoient; et jamais, jamais Mr. de Fénélon n'auroit écrit à la Comtesse du Barry, que son état étoit une énigme.

Ce dernier mot, Madame, en mettant

même dans toute sa candeur; et pour s'y soutenir, il me fournit une preuve de plus, en ajoutent à Madame de Maintenon qu'elle est à la place des reines; et comment pouvoit-il la voir élévée à ce rang auguste, si ce n'est par les nœuds sacrés du mariage?

Milord dans une pointe; un badin, un rieur diront avec sel, que personne ne remplit mieux la place d'une reine, que la maîtresse d'un roi, et on les entend; alors donc il y auroit bien des reines à la fois dans quelques cours, et bien peu de royaumes qui n'abondâssent en majestés. Mais le sujet sérieux qui m'occupe, simpathise peu avec leur plaisanterie; et l'intérêt qu'un sentiment de justice inspire pour l'innocence attaquée, prévaudra dans sa défense que je terminerai en jettant un coup d'œil

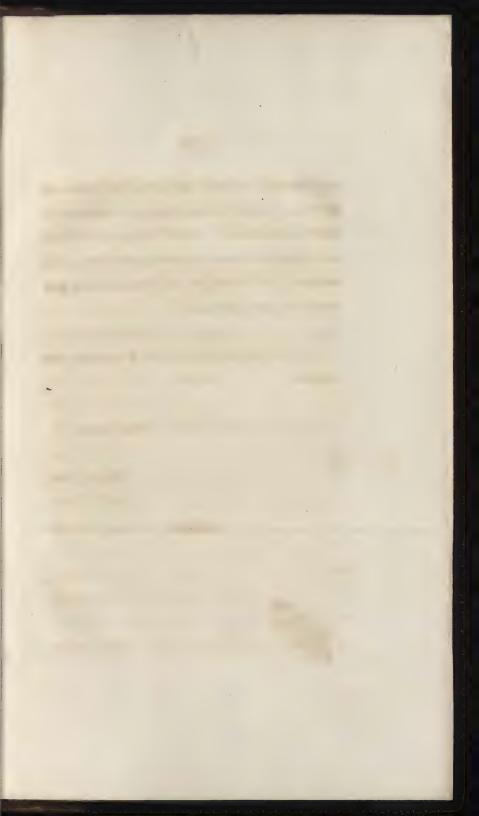
plutôt en vous rappellant ce qui les causa. Ce fut ce qu'il avoit de plus cher: son amour pour la vérité fut son premier ennemi, et le perdit dans l'esprit d'un maître qui n'étant pas toujours disposé à l'entendre, l'envoya mourir en exil. Et cet homme que sa vertu fit bannir de la cour, y auroit tenté les grandeurs à force de basesse! Lui qui ménoit ses princes dans la carrière du véritable honneur, il auroit pû s'en écarter jusqu'à se couvrir d'ignominie! et lui qui bravo son roi pour son devoir, il auroit pû trahir son devoir et son roi par la fourbe la plus infâme?

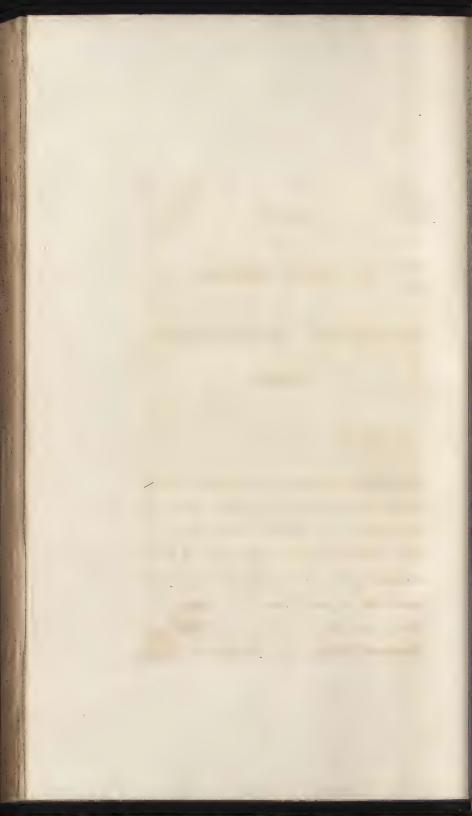
Prenez la balance, Madame, et dans l'instant vous m'accorderez que Milord Chesterfield, soit que trompé grossièrement, soit par un esprit aussi satirique qu'injuste, a voulu accabler de blâme et de mépris, un homme auquel il auroit dû éléver des autels. Mais l'éloge de celui-ci est réservé à une plume supérieure à la mienne; et la critique de l'autre n'est pas une bésogne pour moi.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec beaucoup de respect,

Madame,

Votre, &c.





## LETTRE

DE

## MONSIEUR THOMAS,

Â

## MONSIEUR DESENFANS.

Paris, 1 Mars, 1777

MONSIEUR,

J'AI lu la brochure où vous prénez soin de justifier la mémoire de Fénélon contre les imputations de Milord Chesterfield; je suis entièrement de votre avis; et je ne crois pas qu'il soit permis de soupçonner une vertu si pure d'un crime aussi bas. On ne peut douter en lisant la lettre de Monsieur Fénélon, que Madame de Maintenon ne fut déjà mariée, que l'on pése ces termes qui sont dans la lettre:

"Il est vrai, Madame, que votre état est une énigme, mais c'est Dieu qui l'a fait. Vous ne l'avez pas désiré, vous ne l'avez pas choisi, pas même imaginé. C'est Dieu qui l'a fait; il vous cache ses secrets, et en cache aussi au public qui le surprendroient si vous les lui disiez comme à moi. C'est le mistère de Dieu. Il a voulu que vous fussiez élévée, pour sanctifier ceux qui sont dans l'élévation; vous êtes à la place des reines."

Je démande à tout homme véritablement impartial, si on peut désigner plus clairement le mariage de Madame de Maintenon avec Louis quatorze, et cette espèce de grandeur à demi voilée qui plaçant une simple particulière à côté du trône, lui donnant la plus grande influence sans la moindre autorité la plus grande considération sans aucun tître réel; lui faisoit rendre des respects comme des devoirs, et mettoit à ses pieds les premières personnes de la cour, sans que rien au déhors parut marquer son élévation. C'étoit là, comme dit Fénélon, une véritable énigme.

De bonne foi, Monsieur, peut-on appliquer ce mot à l'état de maîtresse ? peut-il convenir à la situation de ces femmes qui pour la plûpart bien plus ambitieuses que tendres, ne peuvent espérer de ces grandes intrigues, que le deshonneur éclatant d'une grande fortune ? On sait qu'elles n'ont ni le pouvoir, ni souvent le désir de couvrir leurs foiblesses. On sait que toutes leurs démarches sont exposées aux yeux d'une

eour éclairée par ses vices, et souvent aux yeux de plus d'une rivale qui leur envie en secret leur honte, et leur succés. La curiosité, l'intérêt, la malignité publique s'empressent à déchirer le voile dont elles chercheroient en vain à s'entourer. Non, il n'y a jamais eu, et il n'y aura jamais d'énigme dans ces sortes de commerce.

Quand les mots de la l ettre de Fénélon ne seroient pas aussi clairs, qui pourroit simaginer que le plus respectable des hommes eut jamais pu jouer entre un monarque et une femme, un rôle qui dans les cours même avilit les personnes déjà les plus viles, et deshonore ceux même qui depuis long-temps semblent avoir rénoncé à l'honneur?

C'est par sa vie entière, c'est par la

suite de ses sentimens et de sa conduite qu'il faut juger un homme; et l'on veut que l'auteur du Télémaque, que l'ami des personnes les plus vertueuses de la France, que le sage instituteur du Duc de Bourgogne, que celui qui ôsa blâmer avec tant de courage les vices de Louis quatorze, et les abus de son gouvernement; celui qui parla toujours de la religion, non point avec cette éloquence d'enthousiaste qui peut quelquefois ne tenir qu'a l'imagination, et s'accorder en secret avec des vices; mais avec un sentiment si tendre et si pur, comme on parle de l'objet que l'on aime et dont on a besoin pour son bonheur; on veut qu'un tel homme aît exercé le métier infâme de corrupteur! On veut qu'il se soit servi de la religion pour sanctisser des intrigues honteuses, et ôter au crimes ses remords! Jusqu'à quand se trouvera-t-il des hommes

qui ne veulent point qu'il existe de vertu sur la terre! et qui pourra désormais se croire à l'abri de la calomnie, si la sainte mémoire de Fénélon ne l'est pas!

Ce n'étoit pas ainsi qu'en jugeoit son siècle, lorsque dans son exil de Cambray il recevoit l'hommage des souvérains; lorsque dans la guerre de la succession nos ennemis lui servoient d'escorte sur ses terres; et que Marlborough et le Prince Eugene, en ravageant la France, se faisoient glorie de respecter en lui une vertu qui sembloit appartenir à l'Europe entière. Ces honueurs qu'il a reçus de son vivant, le vengent assez des outrages qu'on ôse faire à sa cendre. Cependant tous les François Monsieur, vous doivent de la réconnoissance pour avoir entrepris de défendre sa mémoire. Les grands hommes de chaque

pays sont la propriété la plus chère des nations. Un instinct involontaire nous porte à les honorer dans les siécles même où ils semblent être nos accusateurs, et où leurs grandes qualités nous reprochent nos vices et nos foiblesses. Il semble que nous nous rapprochions encore des hommes célébres par l'admiration qu'ils nous inspirent. Jamais, Monsieur, la mémoire de Fénélon n'a été plus honorée qu'elle l'est aujourd'hui en France; son nom est parmi nous celui de la vertu, et on ne le prononce plus sans un respect mêlé d'attendrissement.

L'académie François lui décerna il y a quelques années, les honneurs d'un éloge public. Un homme vertueux qui est aujourd'hui en France à la tête de l'administration des arts\* faite exécuter par ordre

Mr. Le Comte Dangevillers.

du gouvernement, la statue de cet homme célébre, avec celles de Sully, de Descartes, du Chancelier de l'hôpital et du Président Montesquieu. Bientôt on y joindra celles de Turenne et de Paschal. Dans peu ces statues seront exposées aux regards publics. Nous ôsons parmi nous rappeller quelques institutions d'Athènes; et la France a aussi ses Periclés qui se servent du pouvoir des arts sur une nation sensible pour y nourrir l'enthousiasme des vertus, et entretenir ou réveiller le sentiment de la grandeur nationale.

La France et l'Europe entière honorent Fénélon; Milord Chesterfield ôse l'outrager. Si Fénélon vivoit encore, il pourroit imiter le trait de Scipion qui accusé d'un crime devant le peuple assemblé dit pour toute réponse; j'ai combattu pour vous et sauvi la patrie; allons rendre graces aux dieux; et tout le monde suivroit encore Scipion au capitole.

J'ai l'honneur d'être bien parfaitement,

Monsieur,

Votre, &c.

#### LETTRE

FROM

### MONSIEUR THOMAS,

TO

# MONSIEUR DESENFANS.

Paris, March 1, 1777.

SIR,

I HAVE just read the pamphlet in which you have undertaken the defence of Monsieur de Fenelon's memory, against the imputations which Lord Chesterfield has cast upon it.

I am entirely of your opinion, and think that we ought not even to suspect so pure a virtue of so base a crime. Who can doubt, in reading his letter to Madame de Maintenon, that she was not already married? We need but recur to his own words to receive conviction.

"It is true, Madam, (says he) that your situation is enigmatical, but it is God who has ordained it should be so. You neither desired, nor chose it, nor even conceived an idea of it, yourself. It is the work of God. He hides from you his secrets, and hides them from the world also, which would be much amazed if you should reveal to it what you have imparted in confidence to me. It is God's mystery, who has been pleased to exalt you for the sanctification of those who were born in the highest state of elevation. You fill the place of queens."

I appeal now to any impartial person, if any thing can be more clearly implied in this passage, than the marriage of Madame de Maintenon with Lewis XIV? And that half-veiled grandeur which placed a private individual so near the throne, gave her the greatest influence without the least authority, the utmost consideration without any real title, and rendered her an object both of respect and duty, by setting her above persons of the first rank at court, was certainly, as Fenelon says, a true enigme.

Is it possible to apply this term to the state of a mistress? Is it suitable to the condition of those women, who, generally more ambitious than tender, hope only from such high intrigues to emblazon their dishonour by an accumulation of fortune? We know that it is not in their power, and

seldom even in their will, to conceal their weaknesses. We know that their conduct is observed by the eyes of a court made quick-sighted by its own vices, and often by the still more prying attention of many rivals, who envy in secret their shame and their success. Curiosity, interest, and public malignity, would eagerly unite in tearing off the veil with which they might in vain endeavour to cover themselves. No: there never was, nor ever will be, any thing enigmatical in such kind of connections.

Granting that the words of Fenelon's letter were not quite so clear as they are, who could suppose that the most respectable of men would have descended to act between a king and his mistress *ex parte*, which even in a court would debase the

most contemptible characters, and dishonour even those who long have seemed to renounce all honour?

It is by the constant tenor of his life, by the consistency of his sentiments and conduct, that we should presume to judge of any man; and yet it is said, that the author of Telemachus, one who lived in intimate friendship with the most virtuous of his cotemporaries; he who was the wise instructor of the Duke of Burgundy; he who dared to condemn the vices of Lewis XIV. and the misconduct of his government; he who has spoken of religion, not with that enthusiastic eloquence which sometime arises from an over-heated imagination, and may accord but too well in secret with our vices, but with that purity and tenderness of sentiment with which we speak of the object of our love and source of our felicity and it is said, that such a man had practised the infamous trade of a corrupter! had prostituted religion to the most shameless purposes, and scanctified crimes to prevent their being attended with remorse! How long shall there be found, not men, but monsters, who deny the existence of virtue upon earth! Who henceforth may believe themselves beyond the reach of calumny, when the sacred memory of Fenelon has not escaped its venom!

It was not thus that his cotemporaries thought of this virtuous man, when, in his exile at Cambray, he received the homage even of sovereigns; when, in the war about the succession, our enemies served him for an escort on his lands; and that Marlborough and Prince Eugene,

in ravaging France, added to their glory by respecting in him such distinguished virtue as ought not to belong peculiarly to one nation, but to be considered as the general property of Europe.

The honours he received while living, amply compensate for the outrage which has been committed against his ashes. However, Sir, France owes you its gratitude for having generously stept forth in defence of his memory. The great men of every country are its highest honour, and the dearest property of all nations. An involuntary instinct compels us to respect them, even in an age where the superiority of their virtues and talents seem to render them our accusers, from a comparison with the vices and weaknesses of the present æra. The admiration with

which we are inspired by the characters of celebrated men, seems to raise us nearer their standard. Never, Sir, has the memory of Fenelon been more revered than it is at this day in France: his name amongst us is that of Virtue, and we pronounce it not but with a respect mingled with tenderness.

The French Academy, some years since, decreed him the honours of a public eulogium; and a person, eminent for his virtues, now presiding over the administration of the arts,\* has by order of government, directed a statue to be executed for this illustrious man, with those of Sully, Descartes, the Chancellor de l'Hopital, and the president Montesquieu. Those of Tu-

<sup>\*</sup> The count Dangevillers.

renne and Paschal are to be joined to this immortal group, and in a short time they will be exhibited to the public view.

We dare recall amongst us some of the Athenian institutions; and France has also its Pericles, who employs the power of the arts over a sensible people, to nourish an enthusiasm for virtue, and to awaken and encourage the sentiments of national greatness.

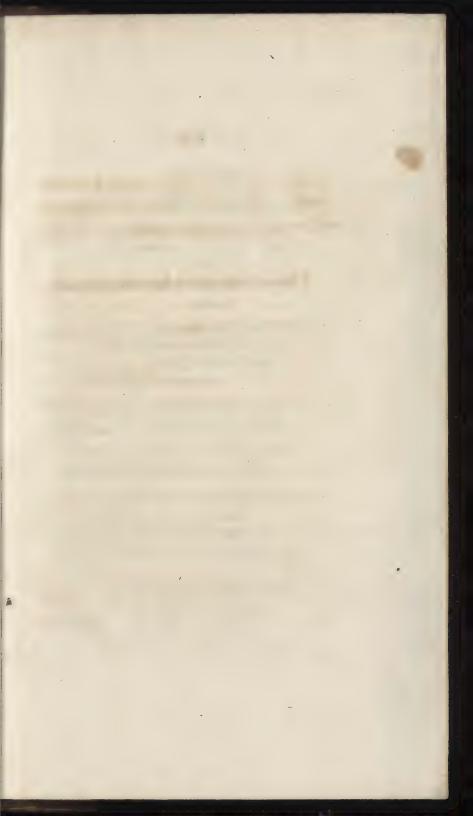
France, or rather all Europe, honours Fenelon; Lord Chesterfield dares outrage him! If Felenon was living, he would probably imitate the conduct of Scipio, who, when he was accused of a crime before an assembly of the people, made only this answer, "I have fought for you, and

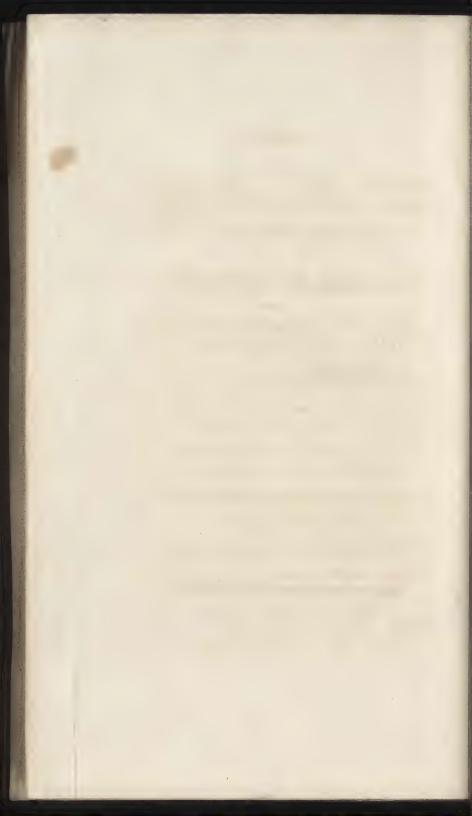
saved my country; let us go and return thanks to the gods." And all the people followed Scipio to the Capitol.

I have the honour to be most perfectly,

SIR,

Yours, &c.





#### LINES

ADDRESSED TO

## NOEL DESENFANS, Esa.

ON HIS DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF PICTURES, PUR-CHSAED FOR THE LATE KING OF POLAND.

#### BY JOHN TAYLOR, ESQ.

THOUGH tasteless TIME, with slow but certain rage,
PAINTING's sublimest treasures will destroy,
Yet those preserv'd in thy descriptive page,
Uninjur'd, shall Posterity enjoy.

So well thy pen each Master's style displays;
Such force and beauty in the work we find,
That Fancy, charm'd, o'er ev'ry picture strays,
And feels the rich collection in the mind.

Nor bound to mere Description's boldest reach—
Thy labours to a nobler fame aspire;
Knowledge so moraliz'd shall Critics teach
To judge with candour, and with truth admire.

Hence future Artists shall those labours prize,
Which rescue Genius from its ruthless foe;
And hope another Desenfans will rise,
In Time's despite, to bid their colours glow.

London: Printed by John Dean 57, Wardour Street, Sohe.

-1 17 000 10 20

